INDIA AND DEMOCRACY

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&
DEMOCRACY

BY

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Macmillan and Co., Limited

London, Bombay, and Calcutta

1923

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AFTER visiting a land so hospitable as India it is impossible to record the innumerable obligations which one has so happily incurred. But I cannot let this book appear without mentioning especially my debt to Sir Malcolm Darling, the Cobbett of the Punjab ; to Sardar K. M. Panikkar, who infuses into Indian courts the airs of Weimar ; and above all to Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India, most learned of constitutionalists, who has revived the tradition of eloquence and scholarship for which the British administration in India was once renowned.

GUY WINT

BEYOND endorsing Mr. Wint's expressions of gratitude to all those in India who helped him at my request, I must add my own thanks to Sir Malcolm Darling for advice on part of my text and, above all, to Sir Frank Noyce, whose generous aid at every stage in the preparation of this book has been a source of encouragement and wisdom, which has revived happy memories of collaboration at the council table in India.

GEORGE SCHUSTER

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INTRODUCTION

By Sir George Schuster

I

In planning the study which is the foundation of this book my desire was to see the issues of to-day in their true significance and proportion as part of the unfolding scroll of India's destiny — to survey the past acts of an age-long drama not merely as an aid to interpreting the present scenes, but also as revealing trends which have characterised the past and which are likely to continue in the future. " Politics ", as Seeley wrote, " are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics." A proper sense of proportion in the appreciation of present problems may provide both a reassurance to those who are intimidated by their apparent difficulty and a safeguarding restraint on others who, feeling that their urgency brooks no delay, might be led into hasty courses. To a political leader, filled with a passionate enthusiasm, it may well be intolerable to see the years of his span of life passing without the realisation of his ideals, but in terms of Indian history this is a little matter, and the true friend of the Indian people may well be he who, without losing his enthusiasm, is yet able to temper it with patience.

For the fulfilment of the purpose which I have thus described, it seemed to me that it would be advantageous to get the review of the broad drama conducted by one who had not been concerned as an actor in it or formed his views from special kinds of contact, official or otherwise, but yet could devote sufficient time to gain more than the superficial impressions of a casual visitor. At the same time, I wanted to combine with my own the

outlook of a younger generation. So I arranged with the joint author of this book, Guy Wint,[1] to make his own investigations. For this purpose he spent the greater part of two years in India, a course made possible by a generous grant from the Trustees of the Leverhulme Research Fund. His survey is printed as Part I of this book. Beyond helping to plan the main lines for investigation and the form of treatment, I have no responsibility for it. It represents an independent judgment, and has resulted in a picture in some respects different from that which I had expected. I feel indeed as one who has commissioned an artist to paint a portrait of a friend and is surprised at some of the characteristics revealed. To certain features I should myself have accorded another treatment or a different emphasis.[2] But I commend it to all who are interested in India as a sincere piece of work, inspired by a single-hearted desire to discern the truth.

On the picture thus drawn I have, in Part II, recorded my own observations, and, turning my attention from the past to the future, have attempted to sketch the tasks which will lie before the government in India, the way in which these tasks may be performed, the form of Constitution which may be adopted, and, lastly, a vision of India's place in the world and her relations with the British Commonwealth.

My own part of the work has been carried out in conditions of considerable difficulty. London in war-time for one who has had other insistent demands on his time has not been an ideal place for profound study and calm writing. Also, all the time, the scene has been changing, and one has been oppressed by a sense of unreality in discussing tasks of peace and social progress, or in review-

[1] Mr. Wint had previously spent four years in China, first as Secretary to the Economic Mission sent by the League of Nations at the request of the Chinese Government, and later as Secretary to the Economic Advisory Council set up by that Government.

[2] On some points — particularly the estimate of Mr. Gandhi's contribution — the difference of my outlook is apparent from what I have written in my part of the book.

ing past history, when the relentless pressure of the present war has made peaceful objectives seem a dreamer's vision, and threatened to obliterate all the landmarks of the past. But, on a true view, those issues that are involved in the Indian problem — the establishment of freedom combined with order, and the advancement of social welfare — are the things which really matter and which ought to be the issues of our times. It is Hitler's 'realities' that are out of date and evil dreams. Also the Indian problem has a very real bearing on the present struggle, and is closely affected by it. Both during the war and after it is over, this problem must be a matter of major importance. Therefore, although the rapid march of events and the uncertainty of the future have created obvious difficulties in the treatment of many aspects of the subject, it has seemed to me important to press on with the work, in the hope that it may prove to be of value in stimulating realistic thought on Indian problems. At the same time the pressure of current events has inevitably affected the form of the book, so that historical survey has yielded place somewhat to discussion of the present position, while, as a background, the world conflict rather than past history has come to dominate the scene.

2

So much for the form and method of the book.

As to the spirit in which it is written, I am not ashamed to confess that I retain the belief that understanding and co-operation between Indians and Englishmen are still possible. It is the fashion to-day in many Indian political circles to deny this; but, in spite of all the difficulties and misunderstandings which there have been, my own experience encourages me to take the more optimistic view. If co-operation is possible it is certainly necessary. The affairs of our two nations are so intermingled that, even if we planned separation in the most immediate and complete manner that would be practicable, the steps towards that

end would extend over a substantial period and must be taken together ; and, even if that end were accomplished, the two countries would inevitably continue to influence each other's destinies. " A little generous prudence, a little forbearance for one another," wrote Milton, " might win all these diligences to join and unite into one general and brotherly search for truth." If the Indian drama is not to end as a tragedy, the two nations need to act with generous prudence, with forbearance for one another, and, above all, to join and unite amidst the menacing jungle of difficulties which surround us into one general and brotherly search for truth.

It is not, of course, to be expected that a survey of this kind by two Englishmen will pass without criticism in India. We shall doubtless be accused of showing ' forbearance ' rather to the British than to the Indian side, and to have failed at many points in our search for truth. All that I can ask is that the book should be seriously studied, and that those who criticise should justify their criticism by setting themselves higher standards of truth and diligence.

True understanding and forbearance are not possible without appreciating the various strands in human character. None is completely single and consistent. Motive and mood vary so that actions at different times are difficult to reconcile with one another ; and, beyond this, each single action is often prompted by mixed and different motives. As with men so with nations. Uncharitable critics may judge inconsistencies as signs of dishonesty, and discern hypocrisy in mixed motives. The British who act so much on improvisation, so little according to a preconceived plan, are particularly liable to attract this sort of criticism, a liability which is increased by the system of democratic party government involving frequent changes of the political party in power, and the reflection in policy of changing public opinion.

One who studies the history of the British connection with India can trace many strands of character or motive,

and many changes in their relative importance according to changes in public opinion and in standards of public conduct. This has led from time to time to apparent inconsistencies in policy, to hopeful starts up one road followed by checks, retrogression, and perhaps diversions to another road. Yet when the Indian story is reviewed over the whole period of the British connection, whether it be followed in the record of acts in India or of comment and debate in England, it is possible to trace a steady and consistent purpose inspired by a spirit which in the main has not varied. The purpose has been the establishment of self-government in India, the spirit has been one of liberalism. This has been well brought out in Wint's report in Part I.

This spirit and purpose have, of course, not always been shared by the individual Britishers — administrators, soldiers, or business men — working in India, with whom Indians have actually come in contact. But such men, while they have often done notable service in India, have not truly represented the British purpose, nor in the end have their views prevailed.

3

While this may be truthfully said, it must also be urged that the British public have never in the past fully appreciated the significance of India nor do they now fully realise the immense importance of the Indian issue. Even among the titanic events of these days it holds a notable place. The British public has always taken India too much for granted, first as a possession smoothly governed, and then as a member of the British group destined to follow the usual process of evolution towards self-government under a Parliamentary system.

But now when we stand at the point of the final and decisive act, it so happens that, before it has been consummated, the scene has changed both in the surrounding world and in India itself. The easy confidence of the

years immediately following the last war that any country, however backward politically and however deeply riven by faction, could make a success of democratic government has had to be abandoned, partly as a result of failures of that system in particular cases, partly because of tendencies in the world which, expressing themselves both in economic difficulties and in the development of power politics in certain countries, have forced on all the need of a closer and more positive political organisation. And now the war has come which has vastly intensified this latter need and must, however it ends, leave conditions in which it will continue. At the same time actual developments in India have thrown a new and clear light on India's own special conditions and dangers. In the light of these and in the changed world conditions disquieting questions arise. Will not the size of the country, the diversity of the people, and the bitter feuds of the communities mean that a breakdown of democratic government will lead to confusion and lawlessness? Is it not true that Indian society has been so much shaken by the intellectual and economic upheaval caused by the impact of the West, and by the political upheaval of the successive agitations set afoot by Congress, that it has become a very delicate structure indeed which might easily collapse into chaos and disorder? If that were to happen so that the country threatened to revert to the conditions of the eighteenth century, would not Great Britain be faced with a problem of grave urgency and embarrassment? Could a British Government allow India to lapse into chaos, and to become, instead of a haven of order and relative quiet and prosperity, a storm-centre of revolution and international intrigue with all the immense consequences that would follow to Asiatic politics, world economy, and ultimate world peace? In fact, if self-government proved impracticable, would not the British Government, however strong might be British sympathy with the ideals of the Nationalist Movement, be compelled inevitably to intervene? And what would

such intervention mean in the changed conditions in which authoritarian rule might no longer willingly be accepted ? How would such a position react on the whole conception of the British Commonwealth ? How could it be reconciled with the purposes for which the present war is being fought ?

Indeed the British people have staked more than they have realised on the success of the Indian Constitution.

These are negative considerations. On the positive side the importance of India can be seen to be equally great. Obviously the position of India with her area as large as all Europe without Russia, and her population of 400 millions, must, in the matter of mere size alone, make an immense difference to the significance of the British Commonwealth. Strategically, in the conditions of the world war which now surround us, the importance of India on the route to the East and to Australia and New Zealand needs no emphasis. Economically, too, India in the future must have a part of great significance to play in any general policy of international co-operation designed at once to increase welfare and to promote a liberal way of life — and in saying this I have not in mind any form of exclusive co-operation with England, but the importance of having India as a prosperous and co-operating country and not a country depressed by internal chaos or dominated by the narrow closed economy of any other power. But perhaps the most significant point of all is the effect of India on the whole character of the British Commonwealth. With Indian membership the Commonwealth can be not primarily a racial combination but a bridge between East and West, and thus the main support for the structure of a better world.

In the last paragraphs I have sketched the issues from the British point of view, mainly because it is so urgent that the British public should appreciate the vital importance of the Indian problem and the need for making a far-seeing and statesmanlike contribution to its solution. But that solution must be one which ensures India's highest

interests, and the book itself attempts to present the issues mainly from the Indian point of view. There is no inconsistency here, since, as is emphasised at many points in the later chapters, no nation can achieve security by considering its own interests alone, and the only chance for progress in the world lies in co-operation for mutual advantage.

Let this be recognised, and above all, too, let it be recognised that caution and careful reflection, while there is still time, do not necessarily imply meanness of spirit or lack of full sympathy with Indian aspirations. It is said that there was a path leading up a hill near Pekin, at the end of which was a cliff to which suicides often went to fling themselves down in their final act of self-destruction. At one place beside this path the Chinese authorities placed a board bearing the following notice : " Pause and reflect. If you reflect to-day, you can still do that which you purport to do to-morrow ; but if you do that to-day, you will not be able to reflect to-morrow." Political hotheads may find some wisdom as well as humour in this Chinese warning.

GEORGE SCHUSTER

November 5, 1897.

PART I

By Guy Wint

CHAPTER ONE

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1

INDIA, though not self-governing, has enjoyed for more than a century a political system which in Western terminology would be described as thoroughly constitutional. There has been a known and ordered system of law binding the government no less than the subject ; and the practice of administration has been through and through informed by a respect for individual liberty and established rights.

This had not always been its lot. The modern form of government is quite a new development in India's history. It is necessary to remember that behind the present lies the past, and in all human history the past has a disconcerting way of coming back to life. Let us look back to the past.

2

The history of India has been often told.[1] How in a period of extreme antiquity, perhaps more than three thousand years before the Christian era, there existed in the Indus valley a culture of a remarkably high order. How this seems to have been overwhelmed and how there succeeded a long dark age during which occurred the famous Aryan invasion. How the next clear light does not come until the seventh or sixth century B.C., and how we then see a group of petty states in the Ganges valley battling against each other for local supremacy. How in 326 B.C. Alexander the Great invaded the Indus area, how he halted on the Beas, and how, perhaps partly as a reply to the shock of this invasion, there came into

[1] Perhaps the most compact of the recent full-dress histories is *A Short History of India*, by Moreland and Chatterjee (Longmans, 1936).

being the Mauryan kingdom, the first of the great Indian Empires. How this Empire, whose capital was the city to-day known as Patna, at its apogee extended from the Hindu Kush to the modern state of Mysore, but how it failed to survive more than a hundred and fifty years. How Indian history from then until the coming of the British appears as a kaleidoscope of the rise and fall of competing monarchies. How throughout these two thousand years North India has been periodically harassed by the wild peoples from central Asia breaking down through the North-West Frontier, and how these have themselves time and again been absorbed and lost in the Indian political scene. How after the rise of Islam these invaders brought Moslem ideas and culture with them, and how from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries most of the North was dominated by Moslem rulers.

This is an often told story. It is confused but dramatic : it lacks shape but is full of instruction. Yet this is not the place to study it in detail. Here our interest is limited to one set of questions. What kind of machinery of government has India had at different periods of the past? What has been at different periods the pattern of the state?

The student who lets his gaze range over this great tract of time and over the vast territory which lies between the northern mountains and the Indian Ocean — as large as all Europe if Russia is excluded — is struck first by the fact that until the foundation of the British Raj there has been in India no unified government. The country was too big, the society too loosely knit, for the emergence of a national state such as in Europe in the later middle ages occurred in England, France, and Spain. Rather the political history of India resembled that of the part of Europe whose political evolution was frustrated and retarded — Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. It remained — with consequences which are being acutely felt to-day — the home of a multitude of peoples speaking diverse languages, conscious of their separateness from one another, unaware of the concept of loyalty to a larger

community transcending their sectional divisions. There was a nexus of peoples rather than a single people. India was less a country than a continent.

It is true that there have been great empires. From time to time one of the native kings or an invader sweeping down from the wastes of central Asia would impose upon extensive territories the form of political unity. In North India no less than five such political agglomerations appeared in the two thousand years before the coming of the British, and similarly the rulers south of the Vindhyas — the mountain chain which divides North from South — created from time to time polities which were equally imposing.[1] But the organisation of such structures — except in the case of the Moghul Empire, the latest of these powers — was of a loose and feudal kind. The victorious monarchs lacked the technical means to hold together for long the wide territories and the conflicting peoples brought together under their sway. Empires rose, endured for a period of two or three centuries, then crashed and were dispersed. Sometimes these dissolutions took place without causing great turmoil in the country, and travellers not infrequently commented on the contrast between political confusion and comparative prosperity among the peasants. But more often when an empire or kingdom fell the populace was exposed to the plunder of local magnates and banditti. Indian history is full of periods such as that in England in the reign of

[1] In the North the following Empires may be noticed : (*a*) Mauryan, roughly 322–185 B.C. The origin of the name Maurya is doubtful but was probably a tribal appellative of its founder Chandragupta. (*b*) Gupta Empire, A.D. 4th–5th centuries. (The date is, however, uncertain.) The word Gupta means 'Protected' and was a suffix of the names of the monarchs. Like the Mauryan Empire the Gupta Empire seems to have been based on Bihar. It seems to have extended in the east to the Brahmaputra, in the west to the Jumna, and in the south to the Arabian Sea. (*c*) Empire of Harsha. This was the creation of a gifted individual who seems to have ruled from A.D. 605 to 647. His capital was Kanauj, near the modern Cawnpore. The boundaries of his empire were the Himalayas, the Sutlej, Gujarat, the Brahmaputra, and the Bay of Bengal. (*d*) Turkish Sultanate based on Delhi, 13th–14th centuries. This extended its power to Bengal and south of the Vindhyas. (*e*) Moghul Empire, 16th–18th centuries.

King Stephen. Indeed their recurrence is one of its chief characteristics.[1]

The second main feature which impresses the observer is that the different states between which India has been divided have always shown a certain family likeness. There were bound of course to be many local peculiarities, but in spite of these the separate kingdoms, whether great empires or miniature principalities and whether situated in North or South, formed a recognisable and distinctive type.

The pattern has of course not remained unchanging. In India's long history some institutions have entirely passed away, other quite new ones have appeared. For example, in the earliest period of recorded history, that is in the five or six centuries before the Christian era, there seem to have existed side by side with the larger states a number of small republics administered by an oligarchy and with a vivacious political life quite unlike that of later times and resembling rather that of the cities of ancient Greece and Italy. Later these altogether disappeared. So did the popular or oligarchic assemblies which in the earliest monarchies seem to have limited or shared the royal power. Again in recent centuries the Indian state has become markedly less feudal and more bureaucratic in organisation. In the typical kingdom of early times the monarch administered directly only a part of his

[1] Although the Indian empires were transient and somewhat ineffective structures, in some respects curiously like the Holy Roman Empire, the ideal of empire fascinated very powerfully the mind of the reflecting classes ; this was haunted by the idea of the *chakravartin,* the military hero who overrode the warring states, imposed unity, and gave peace. As Macchiavelli in Italy at the time of the Renaissance claimed that he who aspired to unify the country was bound by no moral obligations, so the Hindu texts permitted every means to be used in the pursuit of imperial sovereignty. The *chakravartin* was regarded as only less holy than the *buddha* or religious messiah ; and indeed the theory was that the same initial qualities were required for both missions, that from time to time supermen possessing these attributes were born into the world, and that it lay within their discretion according to the circumstances of the time whether to benefit mankind by political or religious leadership. Even in physical features a *chakravartin* and a *buddha* were alike, one of the characteristic marks according to ancient texts being the possession of a tongue so long that it could lick the ears.

territories, the rest being governed by princes and magnates the bond between whom and the king was the uncertain one of feudal loyalty ; but a new fashion was set by the Moghul Empire in the sixteenth century and since then the aim of the monarch — not always achieved — has been to administer directly the entire territory of his kingdom, the local governors being officials who held office at his pleasure.

All this is true. Yet if the past systems of government show notable differences when compared with one another, these differences lose their importance when the past is compared with the present. On the broader view what impresses the observer is the uniformity, not the difference, of Indian government through succeeding centuries. While our knowledge of the early kingdoms is much slighter than for later times, and while we cannot therefore compare point by point the polities of ancient and relatively modern times, yet what impresses us in much we do know is their similarity. When through the mists it is seen that nearly all the major and some of the minor recorded characteristics of the early courts correspond with those of later times — even in such trivial matters as the popularity of elephant and tiger fights and the almost fantastic measures of precaution to safeguard the monarch against conspiracy by his relations — it is not unreasonable to assume that much which is unrecorded follows the same lines.[1]

Let us now see what were the chief characteristics of a pattern which remained so fixed. The typical state was a monarchy and much depended on the personality of the king. He was expected to administer the state personally to an extent unknown in the West even in mediæval times ; he was approachable and appeared regularly in durbar to hear petitions from any subject who chose to come to

[1] To suggest that certain characteristics of the political system have remained static is not to suggest that the East has been 'unchanging'. For a discussion of this error see Toynbee, *Theory of History*, vol. i, pp. 64-5. Indian culture and civilisation have been dynamic, not static.

him ; hence the personal tradition which even to-day persists in Indian politics. But government however personal cannot be conducted except through organised institutions, and the Indian monarchy rested on three main pillars : the army, the revenue, and the political espionage corps. There is no better way of understanding the nature of Iudian government than by examining each in some detail.

Of these pillars there is little unusual to notice about the army. It was generally large. Its most remarkable feature was perhaps the comparatively small extent to which it intervened in day to day politics. There was no Pretorian Guard. There was no officer corps with a sense of corporate unity, seeking, as in modern Germany or Japan, to impose its policy on the government. The second pillar, the revenue system, was more remarkable, and here India made an original contribution to political organisation. At a quite early date some of the Hindu kingdoms developed a system of assessment and collection which was ingenious, efficient, and more advanced than any known in Europe until comparatively recent times : more elaborate even than that of ancient Egypt, China, or the Roman Empire.[1] In one of India's earliest political textbooks it is stated that security, an army, an efficient bureaucracy, glory, and conquest all proceed from a well-organised fiscal system ; the key to a well-filled treasury is the key to the throne-room ; and a government whose revenues are interrupted is like a ship without ballast tossed about on the waves and in danger of foundering at the first tempest. At an early period the fiscal theorists had perceived the coincidence of private and public interests, and though the ear of the monarch was more often than not deaf to their advice they never ceased to urge that the best guarantee of a sound revenue was to

[1] The practice of farming the taxes was of course common, as also that of 'assigning' revenues to particular officers as a reward for service. But whenever these practices became very widespread it was usually the sign of the approaching downfall of a kingdom or empire.

foster and extend agriculture, and so to regulate taxation as not to discourage the enterprise of the farmer. The history of many of the Indian states can be read as the reflection of the condition of the royal treasury ; and the creation of empire was an achievement as much of fiscal as of military genius.

So much for the second pillar. It was strong and was responsible for many peculiar qualities of Indian kingship. But in some respects the most individual characteristic of these monarchies was their reliance upon the third main support. This was organised espionage, almost as efficient as, but in use more humane than, the systems of the dictatorships of to-day.

The ' spy ' figures in the earliest political and romantic literature ; it is significant that in the person of Kim he is still the hero of the most celebrated novel on India of the present age. Usually he seems to have been disguised as an ascetic or astrologer. His duties were so manifold, his status so respectable, that it is unfortunate that he is described by a name which has come to be invidious ; and indeed his official title has usually been that of news-writer. That he was indispensable was due partly to the absence in India until modern times of the political and social instruments devised in recent centuries in Europe. Thus he was the intelligencer who informed the monarch of the temper of the people, a function now more or less efficiently discharged by the popular newspaper and, latterly, by the straw ballot ; and he was the agent who kept within bounds the corruption of the subordinate official, to check which is a problem that many countries, including modern India, have still not satisfactorily solved. The tool of the king but also not seldom the friend of the poor, a main part of the government but also the opponent and the terror of the local administrator, he was in some respects the link between the monarch and the peoples ; and he was never abhorred by them as are the Ogpu and Gestapo by the peoples of Europe to-day.

Upon these triple columns of army, bureaucracy, and

intelligence corps, it was possible to erect an imposing edifice. As long as they remained intact a state stood secure, always formidable, sometimes splendid. Judged by their power, the more flourishing Indian states at the height of their prosperity were no less well organised than those ordinarily existing until the past two centuries in the West.

A state needs, however, to be looked at from two sides. First is its stoutness and capacity to endure ; second is its behaviour towards its subjects. On the one hand is the strength of its constitution, on the other the quality of its deeds. And when the Indian state is studied from this second point of view the majority of the kingdoms appear to much less advantage.

The capital defect of Indian political society, that which has stamped it with a peculiar character and which has been responsible for much misery, was the excessive power of the government, in nearly all states and at all periods, over the property and life of its subjects.

In the long run a government will always encroach upon freedom to the extent to which it has the power to do so ; this is almost a natural law of politics, since, whatever the intentions of the men who exercise political power, the sheer momentum of government leads to a constant pressure upon the liberties of the citizen. But in many countries society has responded by throwing up its own defences in the shape of social classes or organised corporations which, enjoying economic power and popular support, have been able to set limits to the scope of action of the executive. Such for example in England was the origin of all our liberties — won from the government by the stand first of the feudal nobility, then of churches and political parties, and latterly of trade unions, commercial organisations, and the societies for promoting various causes. Even in the European lands which were arbitrarily ruled, the powers of the monarchy, though absolute in theory, were in their exercise checked in a similar fashion. Indeed the fascist dictatorships of to-day are the first truly

tyrannical governments which western Europe has known for centuries, and they have been rendered possible only because on coming to power they destroyed all forms of social organisation which were in any way rivals to the state.

Activity and resoluteness, organisation and economic power — these are indispensable on the side of the governed if individual liberty is to flourish. This is the main theme of one of the most illuminating studies of democratic government, that of de Tocqueville written just over a century ago. "Government", he said, "should not be the only active power: association ought in democratic nations to stand in lieu of those powerful private individuals whom the equality of conditions has swept away. If men are to remain civilised, the art of associating together must grow and improve." This does not mean that government is to be harassed in all its actions, for obstruction which is wanton and unreasonable may bring administration to a standstill; the inevitable result of a long period of anarchy is the emergence, by revolution or conquest, of tyranny. But the grand function of private associations is to be for ever ready to defend private liberty when the government threatens unjustifiably to infringe it; they are the 'grim two-handed engine' which must be ever at the door if liberty is to endure.

In India no less than in the West the people have been ready enough to organise in defence of certain objects. Various castes have been tenacious in defence of their privileges and customs. But the peculiarity of India is that the people have shown little instinct to organise themselves for the defence of political freedom. Even this statement needs perhaps to be made with reservation, since it cannot be denied that the Rajputs and the Jat peasantry often showed a hardy independence. But it remains true that in general the forces balancing the power of the throne have been much weaker than in the West; and it was this more than anything else which gave the Indian polity its peculiar character. There was no squirearchy such as in England or indeed in China limited the range of the royal

power.[1] There were no popular leaders ; it is significant that if among the Indian peasantry there have been village Hampdens and heroes such as William Tell their memory has not been cherished, the names remembered in the mind of the people being those either of notable servants of the monarchy or of religious leaders who have kept themselves unspotted from worldly affairs. There has been no assertive middle class. Except in the Buddhist period two thousand years ago there has been no well-organised church. There have been no political secret societies such as were the bane of Chinese government, nor even a turbulent city mob as in Rome or Byzantium. After a very early period in which a kind of popular assembly seems to have flourished, there have been no parliaments or popular councils, at least in the higher ranges of government. Thus it came about that even when due allowance was made for the caste and guild system Indian society could be analysed into two essential components, the government and the politically unorganised people. The princes and monarchs had a monopoly of the political machine and were able to override to a great extent the Hindu philosophy and customary law which exhorted them to keep their authority within bounds.

[1] It cannot be said that in India there was no landed aristocracy, for wherever the power of an established monarchy declined the country broke out into a kind of rash of feudal magnates. In Rajputana, in Oudh, and in parts of southern India the baron was a familiar figure. These barons were, however, themselves petty kings with an interest in promoting, not checking, despotism. In the palmy days of the great empires it seems, though the information as to the early Hindu monarchies is in this respect not quite adequate, that the royal power was directed to rooting up all traces of a hereditary nobility. We have a full knowledge of the policy of the Moghuls, and it was the avowed principle of these monarchs, while surrounding themselves with a nobility provided with such revenues as to be the most luxurious in Asia, to safeguard themselves against the rise of a hereditary noble order by imposing what amounted to one hundred per cent death duties. They rewarded their servants generously with vast landed estates, but they were remorseless in their requirement, at least so long as their power was effective, that on the demise of the beneficiary his entire property should revert to the Crown. Thus there was no stable aristocracy, no hereditary magnates. A great deal of light is thrown on Moghul society by Mr. Moreland's books, *India at the Death of Akbar* and *India from Akbar to Aurungzeb*.

This may be stated in another way by saying that in most periods of Indian history the mysterious thing called public opinion has been so weak as hardly to exist. Though the monarch, advised by his intelligence corps, might from time to time seek by some popular action to gain public approval, yet by and large and on many great issues of policy there seems to have been no public sentiment at all. Contrast with this the history of the West. There public opinion has in the long run, even in absolute states, been sovereign. Does there not lie herein the essential difference between what is loosely termed Oriental government and the European system? This seems to have been what Burke intended in a celebrated if obscure remark: "This mixed system of opinion and sentiment . . .", he said, "has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the states of Asia." It is true that there is a growing protest in intellectual circles in India against differentiating sharply between East and West. But it is surely not open to doubt that there has been a significant difference between the throne of the Maharajahs, the Padshahs, and the Sultans on the one hand, and, if Russia is excluded, of the European monarchies on the other.[1] Even in Shakespeare's England, scarcely the home of political freedom, this seems to have been clearly felt:

> Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds
> But Harry Harry.

That in India there were checks which put some limit to autocracy must not be overlooked. The role of the 'spy' in checking misgovernment has already been noticed. The monarch was unwilling to risk rebellion; and the satrap feared popular disturbance which brought his affairs to the notice of a court always seeking pretences to put down its over-mighty subjects. These were, how-

[1] The Nazi dictatorship is a new departure in European politics, and resembles more nearly the Eastern systems than the one traditional to Europe.

ever, checks which became operative only in the event of the last extremes of misrule.

Absolutism in government is not wholly an evil thing. In many countries and at many times there have been governments which, though permitting little individual freedom and raising heavy taxes, nevertheless gave in return substantial benefits to their subjects. And the Indian monarch, in so far as he beat down the petty oppressor and prevented men from preying too unabashedly on one another, could likewise be regarded as a blessing to his subjects, though a blessing in disguise. So fearful were conditions when civil order had entirely broken down (as not infrequently happened) that even the heaviest tyranny was preferable to anarchy. But of few Indian monarchs can it be said that beyond maintaining order they rendered conspicuous services to their peoples. In this respect the Indian record is distinctly inferior to that of most other major civilisations.

This is not to judge the Indian kingdoms by the high standards expected of modern governments ; even by less exacting parallels they do not show to great merit. In comparison with Rome, which spread over all its provinces its system of jurisprudence and political ideas ; with the mediæval monarchy of England with its legislative zeal and its remarkable achievements in the creation of a judiciary ; with China, whose society was hardly less than a product manufactured by the government ; and even with Russia at the time of Peter the Great, a country and period to which ancient India has some peculiar resemblances, the record of Indian government is one neither of initiative nor energy nor imagination. Thus for example except in some of the southern kingdoms the monarchies concerned themselves little with projects of irrigation, and no parallel can be found to the vast works which were undertaken in China or ancient Mesopotamia.[1]

[1] In the North five irrigation canals — none of them very ambitious — were constructed by Firuz Tughluq, a monarch of the fourteenth century. The longest, which carried the waters of the Jumna to Hissar, was about

If enlightened rulers from time to time constructed roads the interest was spasmodic and was usually aroused only by military necessity ; and their concern with economic life was less to further production than to divert private profit into the royal treasury. Their legislative record was of the slightest, the very idea of legislation being an alien one. Law was thought of as something existing of its own nature from eternity to eternity, like the principles of Euclid or of natural science ; so that for the king to legislate seemed presumptious and impious. In consequence government in India was never conceived in more exalted terms than as a particular person or group of persons issuing particular decrees binding upon particular peoples ; and there was no place for the idea, which is the very breath of European civilisation, of an impartial authority prescribing and from time to time changing the order of social life, and enforcing its will by law binding equally upon all citizens.

The truth seems to be that for all its unbridled authority the typical Indian kingdom was an incompetent government. Absolutism and strength are not synonymous ; and Indian governments were weak governments.

After the most sympathetic reading of Indian history it is hard not to conclude that the private citizen in India before the establishment of British rule suffered more and gained less from the political forces moulding his life than has been the case in Europe. This is true even when it is borne in mind that the oppressiveness of government can easily be exaggerated, that there have been famous kings in India milder than any others in Asia, that at certain periods (for example during the five hundred years of the European dark ages) life in India was for the common man probably no more disagreeable than life in Europe, and that at such exceptional intervals as the reign of Akbar the peasant was economically perhaps nearly as well off

150 miles. The lack of enterprise in this respect was commented on by Babur, the first of the Moghul emperors : " Even where it is practicable to convey water by digging channels, this is not done " (*Memoirs*).

as he is to-day. The fact remains that over the long period the best which the subject in India could hope from government was to be noticed by it as little as possible. The condition of life under which rights are secure and redress assured — the conditions usually indicated in the phrase ' the rule of law ' — were hardly to be found. The celebrated description of Oriental monarchy by Samuel when Israel asked for a king would have seemed all too recognisable to successive generations of Indians.

And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you : He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen ; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instrument of war, and instruments of his chariots. . . . And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take a tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep ; and ye shall be his servants.[1]

The effects of a system of government at once despotic and incompetent are written large over the country, and can be discerned alike in the social, religious, and intellectual life. To trace them in detail is unnecessary, but it may be worth remarking the effects on the economic life. A fact commented on by successive visitors to India from the time of Alexander the Great to the eighteenth century was the failure of the country to develop its natural resources. This seems directly linked with the political system. Over-eager to monopolise every source of profit, suspicious of any of its subjects who displayed wealth or showed organising ability, the government struck down

[1] Manu : " The servants of King's appointed to protect generally become rascals who seize the property of others ".

private enterprise and confined India to a routine of peasant agriculture and small-scale handicrafts. Since all the attractions in life were on the side of the government, and there was nothing but labour and sweat on the side of the governed, the energetic and talented naturally sought their advancement in the state service ; and even banking resolved itself largely into court finance. If some of the governments embarked on economic undertakings on a scale which was not unremarkable, there seems, except perhaps in the Chola and Vijayangar kingdoms of the South, to have been seldom a corresponding effort by private enterprise. It is a curious fact, whose explanation may perhaps be found in the institutions of government, that India never imported from its neighbour China the art of printing, and that even in the two centuries which elapsed between its coming into contact with the West and its conquest by the British not one Indian had the enterprise to set up a printing press upon the European model.[1]

3

No outline picture can do justice to a political life extending over so many centuries ; in the foregoing account many interesting details have certainly been omitted and to a rich and crowded scene there has been given a false appearance of the simple and the coherent. But however many corrections the picture needs, and however much additional matter should be included in order that the representation should be complete, the above would seem to be the central and significant characteristics.

If the facts are accepted it would seem scarcely possible to portray Indian society as democratic, even if the painter deliberately adjusted his lights and shades to this end. Yet this feat a number of Indian historians have in all honesty endeavoured to achieve. They have contrived to see even in the agony and confusion of the most tragic

[1] There were presses set up by Catholic missionaries : but this was European, not Indian, enterprise.

periods of Indian history the redeeming features of a liberal society. To do this they do not base their efforts on the period of more than two thousand years ago, when it seems that there really existed, side by side with the monarchy and limiting its power, assemblies of an oligarchic or popular kind. Their argument applies to comparatively recent times. Their case is that sovereignty in India was not, as in Western countries, concentrated in a single agent such as a parliament or a dictator. Rather it was pooled and divided between a number of different authorities, each in practice if not in theory more or less supreme in its own sphere. Thus although the monarchy was the most conspicuous object in the political scene, it was not the source and spring of all political power. Beside it there existed other organs of government, less spectacular and more humble, yet so far as the masses of the people were concerned no less weighty in influence upon their lives. Such, it is claimed, were the trade guilds in the towns, and such in the country districts the *panchayets* or village councils which controlled in the most intimate way the day-to-day life of the peasantry, while the superior organs of government entered into their lives but seldom. Beneath the pomp, circumstance, and catastrophe of great affairs glided the smooth current of village politics. It is argued that the *panchayets* were essentially democratic bodies; that the true government of India, the government which came most near to the business and bosoms of the people, was thus of the popular kind; and that, on a true view, Indian society, like Chinese, was no other than a federation of village republics, presided over by a central government as unnecessary as it was expensive.

There is another school of historians which goes even further. This bases its researches principally on the South. It claims to have discovered that in the long period corresponding roughly to the European middle ages the entire rural government of southern India was carried on by committees scarcely less popular or elaborate than modern English county councils, and that the

monarch was no more than a kind of gorgeously apparalled umpire who presided decoratively over the state and intervened only when his superior wisdom was solicited by the local bodies. It is argued that this form of government was terminated only by the Moslem invasions which led in parts of the country to the establishment of Islamic institutions of government, and in others where the Moslem arms did not prevail to the conversion of the Hindu monarchies into the military despotisms which were required in order to meet the Moslem assault.

These theories seem to have won an almost unchallenged place in certain Indian schools of thought. They are indeed based upon certain facts which have hitherto not been sufficiently weighed by Western historians. But they can only be accepted with so many reservations as to take away from them most of their significance.[1] For example, the *panchayets* were only partially democratic and at times they seem to have been no more than the agents of the royal government; over very considerable areas no trace at all can be found that they ever existed. The evidence for the impressive councils which are alleged to have governed parts of South India is still inadequate. Indeed there is reason to believe that the inscriptions on which this new vision of Indian history chiefly depends refer not to typical villages but to exceptional communities of a special caste of Brahmans. The most which can perhaps be said is that certain popular institutions have at certain times flourished, and this has demonstrated that the Indian people did not lack the capacity to organise themselves for public affairs such as justice, police, and the building of tanks, roads, bridges, and forts. The tragedy of Indian history, and the feature which most sharply distinguishes it from that of Western

[1] The nature and function of the *panchayets* is one of the most vexed questions in Indian history. The celebrated discussion by Sir Henry Maine in *Village Communities in East and West* needs to be reconsidered in the light of new evidence. An interesting recent work is Altekar, *Village Communities in West India*. See also Lord Hailey's address to the Royal Society of Arts in 1939: *The Relation between Social and Political Systems in India*.

countries, is that upon these foundations the monarchy never built a more substantial frame-work of government. The consequence was indeed considerable, and was that there never grew up in India, except on the most petty scale, political organs linked with and managed by the people themselves. The conception that politics was the concern of the whole nation, each individual having a concern in and in some measure a responsibility for the actions of government, was unknown until the arrival of the British.

4

Discussion in general terms of the characteristics of a political system leaves on the mind a somewhat abstract impression. It may be that a more vivid way of illustrating the main features of Indian political society is by means of vignettes of three typical periods of its history.

. . . .

From early Hindu texts and from Greek travellers a vivid picture can be pieced together of the so-called Mauryan Empire, the first Indian Empire, which came into being at the turn of the fourth century B.C.[1] The Greek accounts are the more readable but also the more fanciful. For them India has already assumed the role in which it was for more than two thousand years to be seen by Europeans : a far-off baneful country whose marvels were so many that they obscured interest in the everyday things of life. A Greek admiral speaks of a tribe with feet so enormous that they used them as sunshades and of another people able to wrap themselves in their ears. Multitudinous princes, showers of pearl and gold, dazzling colours, strange poisons, swarms of monkeys, deadly snakes lurking everywhere " in tents, in vessels, in wells " and often making houses uninhabitable, elephants of uncanny intelligence and remarkable morals whose accomplishments extended even to " sewing beautifully " : these were what India connoted to the Greek world, and

[1] Principal rulers : Chandragupta, 322–297 B.C. ; Asoka, 274–37 B.C.

the picture still lives in the popular mind of Europe to-day.

In spite of these fantasies it is possible to pick out fairly clearly the structure of government, and it seems that the kings of this period had already taken on most of the attributes which were to render the Indian monarchy a distinctive type. The routine of their daily life was almost indistinguishable from that of the Moghul emperors nearly two thousand years later ; they aimed at discharging in person the functions of administration, sat regularly as judges (like St. Louis at the oak of Vincennes), and at intervals made progresses of inspection through the empire ; and already there was established that most individual and admirable of Indian traditions, that those in authority should be accessible in audience to the meanest of subjects. The empire was part feudal, part governed by direct administration ; the government attached great importance to revenue and was aware of the need of self-restraint in collecting the land taxes ; it sought to extend its control over economic life and watched with jealousy and fear the activities of private enterprise ; it attempted to convert into royal agents the guilds of the merchants and artisans ; its reliance upon spies was as unblushing as it appears to have been successful. In all essential respects the structure of the state was military ; and it set a pattern to which the subsequent empires were to conform.

It chanced that in the atmosphere of terror and intrigue which seems to have characterised the court there was born as a kind of biological ' sport ' one of the great royal saints of history under whose rule India enjoyed a short period of altruistic and ordered government which has haunted its memory ever since. This was the emperor Asoka, who ascended the throne in the year 274 B.C. Like other princes who have become distinguished for their virtue, Asoka in the early part of his reign seems to have been little less ruthless than the ordinary monarchs of his time, but under the influence of Buddhism his life

gradually changed. Thenceforward he infused into the administrative machinery built up by his predecessors a regard for humanity almost unique among the governments of the ancient world, curbed its oppressiveness, and applied it to the advancement and civilisation of his people. He built roads, planted them with trees, established rest-houses for travellers, opened the first hospital for animals recorded in human history. He exhorted his subjects to follow a more kindly way of life, and to this end launched a mission on the grand scale, inscribing the texts of Buddhist scriptures throughout the country. " He wrote on the rocks of India as if he were dictating to a stenographer ", it has been said. " His activity was not so much that of a pious Emperor as of an archbishop possessed of exceptional temporal power. . . . In the gallery of pious Emperors — a collection of dubious moral and intellectual value — he stands isolated as perhaps the one man whose only passion was for a sane, kindly, and humane life, neither too curious of great mysteries nor preoccupied with his own soul but simply the friend of man and beast." [1]

The special interest of Asoka is as being the first of a type of monarch whose appearance has never failed to stir the Indian imagination. The idea of the king who is also mystic and ascetic has held permanently the Indian mind.

. . . .

Our next scene is nearly two thousand years later. It is the latter half of the seventeenth century, and the Moghul emperor Aurungzeb reigns at Delhi. The Moghul power is reaching its greatest expansion : it is already past the peak of its vigour but this is obscured from all but the most observant.

In the long tract of time between the death of Asoka and the rise of the Moghuls India had passed through many vicissitudes. Scythians, Huns, Arabs, and Turks had all invaded the country, not only conquering great territories but also changing the racial composition of the

[1] Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism.*

population ; the spoken languages had been transformed almost beyond recognition ; three great empires had risen and fallen ; one world religion, Buddhism, had almost vanished from the country of its birth, and Islam, alien in origin and the antithesis of all previous Indian faiths, had burst upon India with consequences the most revolutionary it was to experience until the impact in the nineteenth century of the industrial West. The Moghul dynasty which in the sixteenth century created a unified Indian Empire was of alien race, at the start heartily despised Indian civilisation, and had never been in the country before a short campaign placed it on the throne. It was in fact of mixed Turco-Mongol descent, its name Moghul or Mongol signifying descent on the maternal side from Chingiz Khan. Traces of the wild origin of these monarchs survived till almost the end of their history ; custom kept always at the door of the king's chamber four horses ready saddled ; and the apolaustic luxury of the court hardly availed to disguise that it was conducted on the lines of a military camp. The wonder is to find in this transformed and part-Islamic India, under princes whose fathers had so lately been mere nomad chiefs and who at one phase a few years before their seizure of Delhi could boast no more material property than two canvas tents, a pattern of political life almost identical with that of the Mauryan Empire.

As then the empire was part feudal, part bureaucratic ; as then the focus of political interest was the court ; as then the revenue system was recognised to be the basis of power ; as then espionage was a respected and indispensable means of government ; as then the court was magnificent, extravagant, and, except in the collection of revenue, aloof from the common people ; as then the life of the monarch was poisoned by fear and suspicion. Even in the periodical production of that curious Indian type, the royal mystic, the Moghuls ran true to form, the emperor Akbar being a not altogether unworthy counterpart of the revered Asoka.

Our sources of knowledge of Moghul times are more extensive than those for earlier periods, and there is an illuminating account by François Bernier, a French physician and philosopher who almost by accident found his way to India in the seventeenth century. A pupil of Gassendi, one of the first advocates of empirical method in science, Bernier has some claims to be considered the acutest observer among all Western visitors to India. Having attended the Moghul court for eight years and travelled in Bengal, he returned to Europe in 1667 and published a survey of the Moghul Empire; this was quickly translated into English, enjoyed considerable popularity, and upon it Dryden based his play *Aurungzeb*. It is perhaps unfortunate that at the time of his visit the Moghul empire was already past its prime: nevertheless the age of Aurungzeb was by no means the nadir of Indian history, and was indeed a much more typical period than the bright, short intervals of reforming government under such an emperor as Akbar.

Of the Moghul princes Bernier says:

> Entrusted from infancy to the care of women and eunuchs, slaves from Russia, Circassia, Mongolia, Gurgistan, or Ethiopia, whose minds are debased by the very nature of their occupation; servile and mean to superiors, proud and offensive to dependents; these princes when called to the throne leave the walls of the seraglios quite ignorant of the duties imposed on them by their new situation. They appear on the stage of life as if they came from another world, or emerged, for the first time, from a subterraneous cavern, astonished like simpletons at all around them. Either like children they are credulous in everything and in dread of everything; or with the obstinacy and heedlessness of folly they are deaf to every sage counsel and rash in every stupid enterprise.[1]

Of the condition of the country he says:

[1] It must, however, be remembered that some of the Moghul princes were men of great cultivation, for example, the unfortunate Prince Dara Shikoh, the brother of Aurungzeb. Moreover, until the decline of the family in the eighteenth century the emperors themselves were men of great parts: otherwise they could scarcely have held so turbulent a throne.

Many of the peasantry driven to despair by the execrable tyranny abandon the country and seek a more tolerable mode of existence, either in the towns or camps as bearers of burdens, carriers of water, or servants to horsemen. As the ground is seldom tilled other than by compulsion, and as no person is found able and willing to repair the ditches and canals for the conveyance of water, it happens that the whole country is badly cultivated, and a great part rendered unproductive from the want of irrigation. . . . The peasant cannot avoid asking himself the question, " Why should I toil for the tyrant who may come to-morrow and lay his rapacious hand on all I possess and value ? " The governors on their part reason in this manner : " Why should the neglected state of this land cause uneasiness in our minds ? And why should we expend our money and time to render it fruitful ? We may be deprived of it in a single moment, and our exertions would benefit neither ourselves nor our children. Let us draw from the soil all the money we can."

He notes that the country roads are cheerless and uninteresting, and substantial country houses such as are found in France and England are nowhere to be seen. Though the total population was immense there were no cities to be compared in wealth with Paris, and he comments on the lack of an urban middle class :

In Delhi there is no middle state. A man must be either of the highest rank or live miserably. . . . In Paris seven or eight out of ten individuals seen in the streets are tolerably well clad and have a certain air of respectability ; but in Delhi for two or three who wear decent apparel there may always be reckoned seven or eight poor, ragged, and miserable beings attracted to the capital by the army. . . . I always represent Delhi to myself as a collection of many villages or as a military encampment with a few more conveniences than are usually found in such places.

Bernier is especially informative about the court aristocracy. As already noticed, a peculiarity of the Indian social structure has been the absence in many parts of the country of a hereditary landed gentry. The nobility of the Moghuls was based on service — in some respects like the system which Peter the Great tried to create in Russia.

Essentially it was a service of adventurers, recruiting any able young man, whatever his nationality or religion, who had the adroitness to set his foot upon the ladder. On the showing which a courtier made under the eyes of the emperor or his chief ministers depended office and promotion. The rewards for loyal service, if uncertain and capricious, were often immense; but the nobles were prohibited from using their fortunes to establish their families in a position of hereditary power; on their death their entire property reverted to the state. Naked they had come to court; there they had been sumptuously clothed; but naked again they were carried out to be buried. In consequence none of them saved, none provided for his posterity, none built palaces. All spent what they had on goods immediately consumable, on dress, horses, gambling, food, wine, tents. Of the display which they kept up Bernier writes:

> They maintain the splendour of the court and are never seen out of doors but in the most superb apparel; mounted sometimes on an elephant, sometimes on horseback, and not infrequently on a litter attended by many of the cavalry and by a large body of servants on foot who take their station in front and at either side of their lord, not only to clear the way but to flap the flies and brush off the dust with tails of peacocks; to carry the spittoon, water to allay the lord's thirst, account books and other papers.

For all the glitter and magnificence of the empire Bernier detected its weakness; it rested on the army, and this was falling behind the standards set elsewhere.

> I could never see their soldiers, destitute of order and marching with the irregularity of a herd of animals, without reflecting upon the ease with which five and twenty thousand of our veterans from the army in Flanders, commanded by Prince Condé or Marshal Turenne, would overcome these armies however numerous.

. . . .

We have studied the political scene of India in two periods of comparative stability when a more or less

powerful imperial government presided over a great part of the country. But such ages of order and of political unity were the exception rather than the rule, and when an empire fell, as has sooner or later been the fate of all such structures in the past, power has passed to the local magnates or to whatever local force was able to seize it ; leaving the peasantry to discover that even the crushing burden of empire was a lesser evil than the turbulence of civil war.

This phase, so constantly repeated, can best be studied in the period of almost incredible anarchy following the collapse of Moghul power. The pillars supporting the central monarchy had crashed. Anybody who could raise an army could establish a principality, and the misrule of some of the adventurers went to fantastic lengths. Of them it has been said that as an English country gentleman regarded foxes so did they their more wealthy subjects ; and as poachers keep dogs so did they shelter robbers to prey upon their neighbour's territories. Nor were they the only scourge, but wandering over the countryside, unchallenged because all effective political power had vanished, was a mass of freebooters — Marathas, Pindaris, and Thugs — a visitation such as Europe knew in the more lawless periods of the middle ages, but the memory of which in the West has long since vanished.[1]

One of the largest and by no means the most disorderly of these succession states was Oudh, now a part of the United Provinces. Maintaining a nominal allegiance to Delhi it placed itself under the protection of the East India

[1] The following is a contemporary description of a camp of the Pindaris after one of their expeditions : " When they reached their homes their camp became like a fair. The plunder of each man was exposed for sale ; traders from every part came to make cheap bargains ; and while the women were busy disposing of their husband's property, the men, who were on such occasions certain of visits from all their friends, were engaged in hearing music, seeing dancers and drolls, and in drinking. This life of debauchery and excess lasted till all their money was gone ; they were then compelled to look for new scenes of rapine, or, if the season was unfavourable, were supported by their chiefs, or by loans, at high interest, from merchants who lived in their camps, many of whom amassed large fortunes."

Company, and as a reward was by the Company exalted into a kingdom. The report upon its affairs published in 1858 by General Sir William Sleeman, the Company's political agent, is an unduly neglected masterpiece of description, one of the outstanding documents of Anglo-Indian literature.[1]

Sleeman's picture shows the various elements of the Indian state which have already been analysed, but in this period of political disintegration they had undergone some significant regroupings, among them a shifting of interest away from the palace. The magnificence of court life was, it is true, still maintained and the court continued to be the cultural centre. Indeed in this age of general collapse a number of palaces were built at the Oudh capital which though decadent were nevertheless meritorious; and the king of Oudh was accustomed to sit up all night listening to the local poets, a habit noted and condemned by General Sleeman. But the court though luxurious had lost much of its political power; it was dominated by singers, dancers, and an impostor who claimed to be the king of the fairies; the nominal commander-in-chief was an infant in arms. The power thus forfeited by the central authority had passed to the rural barons. These, beginning in many cases as revenue collectors, had transformed themselves into a landed gentry, but of a type which resembled less the landowners of the England of the eighteenth century than the English barons of the most lawless period of the middle ages. The main business of politics was the struggle for revenue between these rural barons and the royal officers. Plundering from the peasantry the small surplus available for the payment of taxes, the barons retired into their castles or the jungle defying the royal officers, who, often betrayed by the very government they were supposed to be serving, usually besieged them in vain.[2] Thus had crumbled the

[1] *Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh* (London, 1858: 2 vols.).

[2] The baron, to force the government to terms, would harry the countryside and drive off the cattle, thus bringing agriculture to a standstill, and so

main pillar of government, the revenue. Of the others, the army had been rendered useless by corruption. And the espionage system had become farcical, since the office of the superintendent of the spies or news-writers was, like all other government posts, sold by the treasury to the highest bidder ; he to recoup himself sold the appointments of the news-writers stationed in the districts ; and these in their turn levied bribes from the barons to suppress the reports of their misdeeds.

5

The picture given above of the traditional institutions has been a rather sombre one, and in making a final judgment proper regard must be paid to the brighter side. Hindu governments were always, and Moslem governments sometimes, more tolerant of religious differences than have been governments in Europe. The remarkable architectural remains, the art and sculpture and philosophy, show that the system was by no means detrimental to these branches of civilisation. The revenue organisation was a political construction which had in it the seeds of modern administration. Under wise and temperate monarchs the imperial governments proved to be adaptable to promoting the general welfare and acquired in consequence an aura and a nimbus. Colourful and grandiose, they have left memories and tradition.

destroying the source of revenue. Until he had succeeded in levying blackmail in cash from the government he would pay his retainers with drafts for prisoners collected from local villages and held to ransom. To combat the barons the revenue collectors were obliged to seek the aid of the royal army, available to them only by bribing the minister of war. The passage of troops through the state left behind a trail of rapine, a levy being made from the villagers under threat of their impressment as baggage carriers, the riding down of their crops, or the abduction of their women. If the collector succeeded in taking captive a rebel baron it would be found that the prisoner at once purchased his release by bribes at court and returned for his revenge. If the collector distinguished himself by success in extracting revenue he would be in danger of imprisonment by the king, who would suspect (probably rightly) that he was withholding a large percentage of his takings for himself. The atmosphere was that of a jungle bringing to their fullest efflorescence all the abuses inherent in the Indian political system. These throttled enterprise and drove the peasant from the land.

Yet when all is said it must be admitted that the final impression of government is of a gorgeous peacock-like structure, picturesque but elevated so high above its subjects and so far beyond their control that it was ignorant of and indifferent to their needs. It was a fabric more outwardly showy than comfortable within. If it was less oppressive than some other Oriental despotisms, nevertheless it was more concerned with its own preservation than with the welfare of its subjects. As it was not broadly based on popular institutions its existence was precarious, and the periodical fall of government was followed by an interregnum of anarchy. It was unfavourable to economic progress, and to the development of diversified social classes. In short it was a framework within which no such society as we know to-day in the West could have come to maturity ; and if Indians choose to regard this as one of its merits yet it can scarcely be said that the society which it actually engendered was distinguished for the opportunities which it accorded to the human spirit.

NOTE

There has been a great deal of work in recent years by Indian historians upon the political structure of India's past. A pioneer was K. P. Jayaswal but the chief impetus to the study was the discovery by Dr. R. Shama Shastri of the Kautiliya Artha-sastra, a manual of administration whose date is uncertain but which is very ancient. Among contemporaries it is invidious to single out individual names from a list in which so many are distinguished. But it is generally agreed that the contribution of Dr. Beni Prasad is outstanding. His two chief books are *The State in Ancient India* and *The Theory of Government in Ancient India*. For the history of the political institutions of the South there have been works of great importance by Professor Krishnaswami Aiyengar, Professor Venkataramayya, and Professor Nilakanta Sastri. For the institutions of the Moghul Empire the great authority is Sir Jadunath Sarkar. In every academic centre there is to be found research work which is yielding great quantities of material and which will necessitate the rewriting of Indian history. Indian historical research is rather at the same stage as was geography in the West at the time of the explorations — every year brings fresh matter in the light of which the existing charts have to be redrawn. Among those who have been most active in appraising and popularising the new knowledge, certainly one of the most discerning is Sardar K. M. Panikkar. Among English historians the late Mr. Moreland published some most distinguished surveys of the social and economic conditions of the Moghul Empire.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

I

To study the political structure is only to begin to comprehend the political problem and political history of India. In all countries the *political* structure is in part determined by the *social* structure : the pattern of the one cannot be fully understood unless it is placed side by side with the pattern of the other. And in the case of India the need for such a dual scrutiny is the greater because throughout Indian history its society has possessed certain unusual characteristics which have deeply influenced its political fortunes.

The interest of Indian society is its extreme age ; it points back to a kind of abyss of time. This is especially true of the Hindu part of India, but Moslem society is also full of survivals from the very distant past, since the Moslems are for the most part descendants of converted Hindus who in spite of their new religion have retained much of their earlier ancestral traditions. In the atmosphere of India there seems to be something which, though not preventing progress, has conserved what elsewhere has become extinct, just as in certain parts of the world an exceptionally dry air has preserved paintings and parchments which have perished elsewhere. Recently there has been discovered in the Indus valley the remains of a civilisation which is believed to date from about 3000 B.C. and which if not an offshoot from Ur and Mesopotamia was a culture of similar type ; and it is not improbable that in modern Hinduism there are still traceable survivals from this remote society. Whether this is so or not, Hinduism even as it exists to-day after two centuries of contact with the West certainly bears striking resemblance to the Mediterranean civilisation of

classical times. Strange as the Hindu world appears to the modern Westerner, it would probably have been an environment quite congenial to the citizen of Rome or Athens.

This parallel between modern India and classical Europe can be traced in some detail. Hinduism is polytheistic, and its gods are so many, so similar, and so shadowy that each tends to be identified with some other. Their adventures, like those of the classical gods, are often undignified and sometimes humorous, their behaviour being as dubious as their interests are human. Most feared and by many most revered is the mother goddess, bearer of many names, some awful and some kind. Rivers and groves are holy ; the brooks are tenanted by naiads, the trees by dryads ; libations are poured out to gods and ancestors ; food has magical properties and pollutes whomever does not observe the taboos. And over and above these beliefs is a suspicion that the pantheon and all customs and rites are a mere show behind which broods a supreme and impersonal Absolute cognisable by men in moments of ecstasy. Sensuous and intensely alert to the supernatural, imaginative and eclectic, fearful and propitiatory, this, the world of the Hindus, is the world also of Hesiod and Vergil and Ovid. The classical scholar in search of the classical atmosphere and the background against which was produced Platonic philosophy, Pheidian sculpture, and Roman law, may profit more from the living spectacle of modern India than from the dead ruins of ancient Greece.

These affinities were more sharply noticed in the last century than in our own, and the remarks by G. O. Trevelyan, the nephew of Macaulay, in one of the most entertaining books of Anglo-Indian literature are perhaps worth recalling :

One morning I began to be aware of a hideous din in an adjacent street. At first the sound of discordant music, and a confused multitude of voices, impressed me with a vague idea that a battalion of volunteers was passing by in marching order

headed by their band. This notion was however dispelled by my bearer who informed me that this was the festival of Kali, and that all the Hindu people had turned out to make holiday. I immediately sallied forth in the direction of the noise and soon found myself amid a dense crowd in the principal thoroughfare leading to the shrine of the deity. During a few minutes I could not believe my eyes ; for I seemed to have been transported in a moment over more than twenty centuries to the Athens of Cratinus and Aristophanes. If it had not been for the colour of the faces I should have believed myself to be on the main road to Eleusis in the full tide of one of the Dionysiac festivals. The spirit of the scene was the same. . . . If one of the life-like figures in the Etruscan chamber of the British Museum could have walked down off the background of red pottery into the midst of the road conducting to Kali Ghat he would not have attracted the attention of the closest observer. . . . Three or four strange classical figures, wearing the headdress which is familiar to us from the existing representations of Bacchanalian processions, danced in an attitude which recalled, spontaneously and instantly, the associations of Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities*. All around, musicians were beating tomtoms and clashing tambourines, like the satellites of Evius on the day when he leapt from his car into the arms of the forsaken Ariadne : as he still leaps on the canvas of Titian.[1]

The progressive Indian sometimes objects to the archaic elements in Hindu civilisation being pointed out, feeling that they bring discredit on the country and that they may be instanced as a reason for denying India its political freedom. This attitude while understandable is to be regretted. There is no disgrace in a country preserving the older ideas of mankind, and in English life no less than in Hindu it is easy to detect countless absurdities, primitive beliefs, and outworn institutions. Moreover, in the study of a country the pattern of its society, even if fast-changing and becoming obsolete, cannot be too closely analysed, since it throws a flood of light on trends, predispositions, and inner springs which are as decisive as they are often difficult to detect. A society, like human beings, has in it certain tendencies which may be quiescent

[1] G. O. Trevelyan, *The Competition Wallah.*

for long periods but which are always liable to become active with a profound influence on history, and no part of the world illustrates this better than Europe since 1918.[1] Only by scanning the history of a country over a long period, noting the patterns to which it has conformed in the past, the channels into which its interests and activities tend to flow, and the way in which its people have behaved in various social and political crises, can we equip ourselves, and even then very inadequately, to foresee the prospects and the danger of the future.

The Indian suspicion of an interest so detached and academic is not, however, without some justification. A study of popular Hinduism forces on the attention of the student the peculiarities of the ancient institutions. Their anthropological interest is very great, since Hinduism is one of the most valuable sources for the study of the morphology of human ideas which the modern world has permitted to survive ; but there is the danger of dwelling on them too exclusively and of assuming that they constitute the essence of this extraordinary and luxuriant civilisation. It must therefore always be kept in mind that the popular usages are but folk-lore and folk-culture, the absurdities of which can be paralleled in the popular culture of many other countries, and that if they have been noticed and incorporated in the higher thinking of Hinduism this is because they have been transformed by the alchemy of Hindu philosophy, just as the ancient myths of Greece were reinterpreted in the philosophy of the neo-Platonists. There is a higher and lower Hinduism, and the nobler side of the culture is not soiled by its association with the baser. From different points of view both sides are alike worthy of study. He

[1] For example Nazi Germany has staged again the fourteenth-century drama of the Flagellants and the Jews. The costumes and the slogans are different, but the play is the same. " What we have inherited from our fathers and mothers is not all that walks in us. There are all sorts of dead ideas and lifeless old beliefs. They have no tangibility but they haunt us all the same and we cannot get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines " (Ibsen).

who, in investigating the civilisation of classical Europe, notes its superstition and its primitiveness, does not thereby condemn Greek philosophy or Roman statecraft ; yet neither, out of regard for the achievement of the human intellect in classical times, does he feel called upon to falsify the picture of or turn his attention from the background against which the classical civilisation matured.

2

When we turn to study Hindu culture in more detail we are at a loss where to begin.[1] Like all civilisations Hinduism has undergone constant change, even though it has changed less rapidly than most. Moreover, Hinduism must not be thought of as a clearly defined system of beliefs. Rather than a religion it is a complete civilisation. It has included people holding very different views upon the subjects which are usually termed religious. It has possessed so many dogmas that there has been no orthodoxy, and as its canon has never been closed there have been added in each new century new scriptures to the old. Though it has possessed priests there has been no organised church. Indeed, Hinduism can be defined as nothing less than the sum-total of the ideas, customs, and observances of Hindu society.[2]

Among its institutions are many which are common to all Asiatic agrarian cultures. The great majority of the population were peasants, and the economic life and the social and religious ideas of the peasantry bear a striking resemblance in almost all countries of the world. In all such societies the family looms larger than the individual, and a man's duties are rigidly determined by his status in the family. Family pressure on the individual

[1] The outstanding book on Hinduism of our times is *Hinduism and Buddhism*, by Sir Charles Eliot (Arnold). A recent and very interesting study is by Rice, *Hindu Customs and their Origin* (Allen & Unwin).

[2] Maine : " Hinduism represents itself as an organised religious system, whereas its great peculiarity and its chief interest arises from its having no organisation whatever. . . . Brahmanism is essentially a religion of compromise. . . . It does not destroy but preserves older beliefs and cults.'

is overwhelming. In this, Hindu society differs little from that of China, Persia, or Japan. But Hinduism has also many features which are all its own. One of the strangest is the attachment to or veneration of the cow. The cow in India is almost a deity. It has not always been as holy as it is to-day. In very early times, though greatly prized and indeed venerated for its usefulness, it seems to have been slaughtered without compunction. But for many centuries past to take its life has been rigidly taboo. To what is due the curious fascination exercised by this docile but uninspiring animal? Partly it seems to be the survival of primitive totemism, partly the result of an inherited memory of the feeling of the nomad for his cattle. The lowing of the cow fills the modern Hindu town-dweller with a sense of security and well-being such as was experienced by his tent-dwelling ancestors very many centuries ago.

Another peculiarity of Hinduism is its insistence on ritual. For the orthodox the whole of human existence is a prolonged ceremony; all the ordinary affairs of life are steeped in religion; for every conceivable event customary observances are prescribed. It has been said that every high-caste Hindu is a priest and that his life is perpetual officiation at a service. Rising from his bed, eating his dinner, taking his bath, are in the nature of religious acts, and have to be done in an ordered manner. It is true that complete orthodoxy has always been an ideal unattained even by the most zealous. But the sense that life is a kind of liturgy — the sense, as it were, of always being in church — is profound in the minds of many Hindus, and has the deepest influence on their outlook and conduct.

These traits are of great general interest. They give the colour and setting of Hindu life. But it is not these which have deeply affected the country's political development. What has caused Hinduism to influence so profoundly the political life is the caste system, and its concomitant institutions, Brahmanism and untouchability. To these we must now turn.

3

Caste is the grand peculiarity of Hindu society. It permeates all Hindu life, is a factor in every situation and a complication in every controversy. An eccentric but luxuriant growth, it is without parallel in the modern world, at least in the form in which it is found in India ; for if in other societies rudiments have been detected which might in certain circumstances have developed into the same system as in India, they in fact have failed to do so. To suggest that caste exists in western society is to confuse caste with class. A caste is a hereditary group, a class is not. In a class there is at least an approach to equality of income ; in a caste there is not. Social class is not associated with ideas of purity and pollution ; but these ideas are the very essence of caste.[1]

Caste has certain primary and certain acquired characteristics, and these must be distinguished from one another. Essentially it is concerned only with food and marriage taboos. Members of one caste eat in company with and take water from the hands of none except other members of the same caste and similarly marry with none except other members of the caste. To contravene either of these rules has in the past been rare, and often dangerous ; it has been to be gravely polluted, to incur the odium of one's caste fellows, and in the more orthodox circles to be subjected to sanctions of social boycott which could only be lifted by the performance of an often very costly penance. But though thus limited in its essentials, caste, like a malignant creeper, has spread over all branches of social life. In its long history it has from time to time arrogated to itself, or government has devolved upon it, numerous subsidiary functions, and these have included the adjudication of disputes, the performance of various administrative acts, and the regulation of commerce. Similarly some castes came to be known by occupational names, and their members in general practised the same calling from generation to generation.

[1] See Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Kegan Paul).

These secondary functions have been of much importance in the life of Indian society. They have, however, been less stable than the primary ones. From time to time they have been enlarged or contracted. They have never become part and parcel of the caste system ; they are accretions which it can shed and has often shed without changing its essential nature. Thus to-day caste has lost much of its influence in commercial life. Similarly caste has never implied a rigid system of hereditary vocations. Many castes have always practised a wide range of professions ; Brahmans have been found in all trades ; and to-day a weaver or barber or goldsmith finds little difficulty, and probably at no period has found much difficulty, in changing to a more congenial occupation.

A proper understanding of caste has been much impeded by the theory which orthodox Hinduism has advanced for its explanation. This, not unlike the theory which European philosophers such as Plato have put forward to explain the origins of society, starts with the fact that every community which has advanced beyond the lowest economic level contains groups distinguished from one another by occupation and calling. The theory claims that caste is no more than a functional group of this kind, and that Indian society may be analysed into four such groups which correspond with the four true castes, these being the Brahmans or priests, the Kshatriyas or warriors, the Vaisyas or traders, and the Sudras who correspond to the 'productive classes' of European economic theory of the eighteenth century. The fallacies of this theory hardly need pointing out. It explains neither the rigid rules with regard to marriage, nor the prohibition of interdining, nor the sense of religion and taboo with which caste is invested, and in limiting so narrowly the number of castes it flies against all facts. Census reports enumerate not four castes but many hundreds of castes. Not only does the theory fail to take account of the multitude of existing castes, but those which it recognises have, except for the Brahmans, no real

existence. For the Kshatryas, the Vaisyas, and the Sudras are not single castes, but groups including very many castes. They are categories of castes.

The Brahmanic theory of caste thus falls to the ground. But it must be admitted that modern anthropologists have been little more successful in accounting for its origin. They have deduced it in turn from a desire by conquering invaders to maintain their racial integrity, from an extension of the Aryan institution of endogamous family groups, from magical ideas, and from convenience in economic and political organisation. But caste cannot really be held to be explained by any one of these factors, though possibly they have all combined together in producing the present extraordinary and unique system.

If the origin of caste is uncertain its consequences are all too plainly written upon Indian history. It has proved itself to be the greatest fissiparous force known to politics, splitting society into introspective and egocentric groups which find the same difficulty in adapting themselves to the general national life as do introspective individuals in adjusting themselves to society. It has contracted the sympathies of the people instead of expanding them ; and the normal friendly relations between citizen and citizen found in other countries are considerably circumscribed. It is true that many Hindu thinkers feel that Europeans exaggerate the evil effects, and point out that they have always been much mitigated by the good-humour and common sense of the people, that many prohibitions were more theoretical than real, that every society tends to organise itself into cliques, and that caste neither so exacerbated feeling nor so hampered the free development of the nation as to be a factor of political importance. But this may well be questioned, and it is hard not to conclude that for the deep rifts and disunity which are admittedly the distinguishing feature of Indian society caste more than any other single factor has been responsible. To live in the conviction that the touch of one's fellow citizens pollutes ; to be debarred from marriage

and family connections with them ; to consider it a great sin to eat from the same dish with them — scarcely makes for the solidarity of society or a united nation. Moreover, caste as the dominating institution has set the fashion and tone of all forms of social organisation, so that society has tended to become ever more divided and sectionalised. And not the least serious consequence is that religious and racial communities have partaken of its nature, and the problem which of all others has perplexed India, the organising of diverse creeds and people to live in peace and to co-operate for the common good, has been immeasurably complicated.[1]

4

Within the caste structure two features are specially important. One is Brahmanism ; the other untouchability. Brahmans, like caste itself, are without parallel in the modern world. They are hereditary holy persons, without whom Indian society would have lacked many of its peculiarities. Yet they do not form a church, nor, except in a special sense, an aristocracy.

Their origin is as doubtful as their present position is strange, but it seems likely that in earliest times they were a kind of medicine-men who were reputed to be able to control nature by means of spells, and who, like Prospero,

> Bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
> And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
> Set roaring war.

In the very ancient Sanskrit literature it is stated that the sacrifices of the Brahmans sustained the universe, and apparently it was believed that neglect of these would bring the processes of nature to a standstill. In correspondence with this idea the ceremonies were elaborate, on occasions extended over several weeks, and as remarked by Sir Charles Eliot resembled a culinary operation or

[1] See K. M. Panikkar, *Caste and Democracy* and *Hinduism and the Modern World*.

a laboratory experiment rather than a religious rite. Another of the properties of Brahmans may have been to take upon themselves in some mystic way the sins of the rest of the community, and in the custom of making gifts of food to them as a means of expiating religious offences it is perhaps possible to see a connection with the ancient and once widespread practice of sin-eating. At a somewhat later period they appear as priests of the type familiar to the classical world, and at one time they seem to have exercised considerable political power. As Samuel to Saul, as Nathan to David, such appears to have been their relation to the monarchy ; and a struggle can be traced between the state and a Brahman organisation which, if it was not a church, may perhaps be called a priestly college. A soldierly Brahman who on no less than twenty-one occasions exterminated the entire warrior race ; a Kshatriya who by unheard-of exertions and against intense opposition attained the right to exercise priestly functions — these and similar traditions in ancient literature echo a contest which may in its day have been as formidable as that between Pope and Holy Roman Emperor. The issues, it seems, were not unlike. The Brahmans, if they did not claim that the monarch held his power from them, denied that they owed allegiance to secular authority ; and while insisting on participating in the coronation of the monarch disclaimed obedience to him.[1]

Subsequently their political importance declined, though their political influence as individuals if not as a corporation has never been entirely forfeited. The best-educated caste, with a high standard of ability apparently preserved rather than weakened by in-breeding, they were a natural reservoir on which kings drew for clerks and bureaucrats who might counterbalance the military servants of the monarchy ; and, while the monarchies have changed hands, a comparatively few Brahman families

[1] Hindu kings are sometimes described as "Protector of Cows and Brahmans".

have supplied the successive governments with a remarkable roster of administrators. Moreover, the Moslem and British conquests, whatever their consequence to India as a whole, have to the Brahmans actually restored much of their political prestige. For, with the fall of the Hindu kings, Hindu India, as so often happens with a conquered people, looked for guidance to the custodians of its religious traditions. As the Jews after the captivity turned to the priests, as the Irish to the Catholic Church, so did the Hindus turn to the Brahmans.

Political activity could, however, absorb but a small fraction of the Brahman community, and the rest sought employment as and where it could be found. Brahmans have been soldiers, business men, ministers of state, farmers, fortune-tellers, craftsmen, have followed all occupations liberal and illiberal alike. Many were cooks; for the Hindus, since they were defiled by taking food from a member of a caste inferior to their own, have eagerly employed Brahmans, the highest caste of all. In the rough-and-tumble of economic competition the Brahman spiritual prestige has had some, though not very considerable, money value; yet the typical Brahman was poor, not rich.

The paradox is that, though having ceased to form anything like a priestly college, though in general performing no priestly functions, and though dispersed through all the field of secular life, they have continued to command a genuine if grudging respect. An aura, real if somewhat shabby, still hangs about them even when indigent or illiterate; the reserves of credit of the original Brahman medicine-men were so immense that even after so many centuries they are not exhausted. The prestige of the Brahman to-day is not dissimilar to that of the clergyman in a country such as England, and a spectacle somewhat analogous to Brahmanism would be presented if in England all sons and remote descendants of clerics were entitled, without study, without the need of seeking ordination, and without performing any sacerdotal func-

tions, to inherit the same regard.[1]

Because the Brahmans are anachronistic it must not be thought that they have any the less deeply impressed themselves on Indian social history. Though some Brahman families have sunk very low, the caste tradition has been sufficient to preserve in others a zealous cultivation of the ancient literature and scholarship. Thus Brahmans have acted as the custodians of the national traditions and have kept alive ideas and ways of life which would otherwise have perished of old age ; and without them India would be more modern and less Hindu.

As extraordinary in many ways as the Brahmans are the untouchables who in the caste alphabet are the omega to the Brahman alpha. These classes are usually termed outcasts but are in fact the lowest castes in the social order. In many primitive societies and even in modern Japan certain classes of people, especially those following the more menial occupations, are regarded as unclean and are saddled with disabilities, but India is unique in the high proportion of the population which it has condemned to degradation and the sweeping nature of the prohibitions which it imposes. The treatment of the untouchables has been severe, unreasonable, and hateful. It is true that its rigour has varied in different parts of the country, that only in the South has it taken its more extreme forms, and that since the weakening of the caste structure which occurred with the Moslem invasions some injustices have been removed. It is true also that throughout Indian history a number of untouchables have risen to positions

[1] The great law-giver Manu declares that to accuse a Brahman of a crime is sinful even if the Brahman is in fact guilty. According to him the only supreme duty of man in the present age of the universe is to make gifts to Brahmans, and low-caste men may not become rich because such a spectacle would cause the Brahmans pain. Brahmans may be revered but are seldom loved. The popular feeling about them is shown by such old sayings as the following : " There are three blood-suckers, the flea, the bug, and the Brahman " ; " If you meet a snake and a Brahman, kill the Brahman ". Perhaps their survival is partly due to the fact that they did *not* form a church : as they possessed no corporate organisation it was hard for the government or community to persecute them.

of eminence ; that they have never been debarred from participating in, and indeed have made a notable contribution to, vernacular poetry, painting, and music ; and that the blood-curdling threats against them in the Hindu scriptures have been rather expressions of dislike than regulations intended to be enforced. Nevertheless their ground for complaint remains formidable. In many parts of the country they have been denied the use of wells, roads, and temples ; if their children attended school — which was seldom — they were often segregated from the children of higher castes ; they were denied access to various professions ; in economic life their powers of competition were restricted. There have been castes whose members were compelled to carry a broom with which to obliterate their footprints, lest the sight of these should pollute a Brahman ; and the census of 1931 discovered a group so degraded that its members never ventured out by daylight.[1]

The origin of so strange a social system, like the origin of caste itself, is controversial but it may perhaps be connected with the successive conquests which India has undergone. The most plausible account takes the following lines. It is assumed that the higher aspects of Hinduism were a creation of the various invading peoples rather than of the primitive tribes whom they dispossessed (though subsequently the invaders incorporated much of the tribal lore), but as the way of life of the dominant class Hinduism powerfully attracted the indigenous peoples ; these, however, were unequal to grasping its philosophical concepts and shrank from the high standards which it required in food taboos and ritual observance. Hinduism did not entirely reject their aspirations. A catholic and latitudinarian culture, in many respects not unlike the mediæval Latin church, it met the primitive tribes halfway and promised them crumbs from the Hindu table

[1] The description in Kipling's *Jungle Book* of the feelings of Baloo and Bagheera for the Bandar-log might be taken as representing the feelings of some Brahmans for untouchables.

provided that they never aspired to sit at the table itself. It permitted them to retain their godlings but gave them a Hindu colour. It allowed them to continue many of their customs revolting to Hindu orthodoxy, but at the price of being treated as castes of inferior standing or a sort of lay-brothers ; it dispensed them from strict observance but at the price of social ostracism.[1]

With the institution of untouchability once established, tribes and groups of the most varying character have been apt to find themselves caught within its category. From time to time castes hitherto unblemished have sunk to being untouchable ; while others have as unaccountably risen from degradation to a position of respect.

Not the least strange feature of this strange Hindu civilisation was that the untouchables accepted their status with equanimity, and seem to have looked on their inferiority as a fact of nature to rebel against which was useless. Some indeed avoided contact with Brahmans as carefully as Brahmans avoided them ; they kept themselves to themselves, preserving in their underworld a culture which, though Hinduised, was distinct from and more ancient than Hinduism. As the Brahmans sustained the intellectual traditions of Hinduism, so were these people the custodians of the rites and beliefs of the peasantry, which are of immemorial antiquity and which are probably derived from the primitive peasant civilisation which once prevailed more or less uniformly over vast stretches of Europe and Asia, from the Atlantic coast of Ireland to the shores of the Pacific.

Yet if there was no mass revolt there was an undercurrent of protest. The untouchables, though including in their heterogeneous mass many tribes definitely backward, number also peoples which are highly gifted, especially in the various arts and in aptitude for religious

[1] It is because of their disposition to worship anything and everything that the number of godlings in India is believed to amount to 330 millions. Among these are the spirits of former European officials, now propitiated by offerings of beer, cigars, and whisky. It has been reported that even the Privy Council is worshipped by a caste successful in a case brought before it.

life, and which except in education and opportunity are in no way inferior to the higher castes. From their ranks have in the last thousand years emerged a succession of religious leaders whose preaching has combined a vehement monotheism, a stress on mystical experience, a repudiation of Hindu scriptures, the championship of the vernacular languages in place of Sanskrit, and an assault upon Brahmanism and the caste structure in general. Though expressed in terms of religion their preaching has been an attack on many of the essentials of Hindu society ; it has been a movement protestant, individualist, egalitarian. Only occasionally has it impinged on politics. But like the popular religious movements of the later middle ages in Europe it is a surface swelling which reflects formidable and hidden forces deep within society, a reminder that even the most conservative and rigid social order is unstable and unsure.

5

We have studied the institutions of Hinduism. What of its thought ?

It is dangerous to generalise about the intellectual aptitudes of a people, since in every society there have been thinkers who bear almost none of the national characteristics. Yet where a nation has built up a great corpus of philosophy, and where there are discernible certain habits of mind which seem fixed and permanent, it is imperative to acquaint oneself with at least their main outlines. No student of politics can fail to see a connection between the history of Germany and its heady, passionate, and pedantic philosophy, or between English empiricism and the easy-going and practical nature of English government ; and similarly Indian history is likely to bear the marks of certain peculiarities of Indian thought.

The impression of the Westerner when he first approaches Hindu philosophy is that Indian thinking is

imaginative rather than critical, and is more satisfied with speculations which stagger by their daring then by lesser hypotheses which carry conviction by their aptness. It is impatient of littleness, and if the ideas which it evolves are unusually striking or unusually subtle it tends to give them a permanent place in the national mind irrespective of whether they bear a close relation to reality. This is a natural tendency of the human mind but the result is less science than poetry. Scientific thought, strictly understood, consists of three processes. The first is to note the facts which require explanation, this being an act of observation ; the second, to devise theories to account for them, this being an act of imagination ; the third, to test whether the theories really explain the facts and whether no other theory has a superior claim, this being an act of criticism. It is perhaps not altogether unjust to say that Indian philosophers appear sometimes prone to imagine or dispense with the facts, and to prize theories less by their relevance than by their intrinsic beauties. To them the laborious collection of data never seemed quite worthy of the liberal human intelligence, and was at best a tedious preliminary to the real business of thought whose essence was the spinning of super-subtle conjectures, and the refinement of all hitherto imagined concepts. In other words the method which the Indian thinker instinctively follows is the *a priori* one. Thus Indian metaphysics, while it contains much of value, is a museum of the fantasies which in the course of centuries have floated through the minds of a gifted class of men each vying to outdo the others in brilliance of imagination.[1] To say this is by no means to cast aspersions on India or to compare its culture unfavourably with that of the other great civilisations, for it must be remembered that in all the many civilisations which have waxed and waned in the ten thousand years of human history only in Greece and in the modern Western world has a high value been set on

[1] Maine : " Oriental thought is elaborately inaccurate, it is supremely and deliberately careless of all precision in magnitude, number, and time ".

exactness of thinking. Moreover it is only fair to add that some of the chief concepts of Indian thought anticipated in a striking way the description of the physical world to-day accepted by Western science.

It is perhaps as a result of this grandiose and cosmological turn of mind that the interest of Indian thinkers in the behaviour of mere human beings has been less active than in the west. Indian philosophers have not been humanists. Absorbed in metaphysics they have deliberately disinterested themselves in worldly affairs ; and the conception of such Europeans as Bacon of a society comprehended, ordered, and transformed by the human reason has in the past left them cold, and only to-day has begun to inspire the Indian mind. Ethics, history, and political theory have been relatively little cultivated. Those who in the centuries before Western thought transformed the Indian mind have written on politics have not, like Plato, Hobbes or Hegel, raised the theoretical questions of the justification of the state, or like Rousseau or Marx proposed drastic changes in the ordering of society. They were for the most part practical men whose books were intended as practical guides to the conduct of princes, rather as Macchiavelli's 'Prince' was prepared as a handbook for the Italian despot. Thus their writings, while to some extent influencing governments in their behaviour, have never set in motion the masses, and one of the peculiarities of Indian history has been the small extent to which it has been affected by the political prophet or by the political documents such as in the West on so many occasions have shaken the foundations of society.

Rich and varied as has been the pattern of Indian speculation a number of motives have tended constantly to recur. These are the basic stuff of Indian thought, part and parcel of the Indian character. They are the fixed landmarks in an otherwise changing landscape.

Of these one of the most ancient is the conception of *ahimsa* or non-violence. Though Indian history has been as sanguinary as any in Asia, though many Indian peoples

traditionally regard war as the business of their caste, and though its epic poetry is full of battles, Hinduism to its glory has throughout maintained a strong strain of pacifism. From earliest times there have been sects which shrank from all forms of violence. The Jains indeed carried their principles so far that they refused to cultivate the soil lest they might in ploughing destroy the life of the earthworms, and even to-day condemn, at least in theory, measures to exterminate such pests as malarial mosquitoes. Though this aversion from taking life is thus apt to take fantastic forms, yet it rises from an instinct essentially civilised, and is perhaps the projection into our own age of an element of the civilisation of the future. And among the Hindus the cult of non-violence has certainly not meant pusillanimity or resignation. Hindus have not sat down patiently under oppression, but by observation of human nature have discovered that resistance by non-violent means is in many cases as effective as the use of force. In the earliest Hindu texts there is recorded the custom known as " sitting dharma " by which an aggrieved person takes up his position on the doorstep of his wrongdoer, starving himself until the offender is touched or shamed into redress. Vexatious, unhealthy, and slightly effeminate as this method appears to the average Westerner, it has been proved in certain (but by no means all) circumstances to give surprisingly successful results.

Another mode of thought and action which has repeatedly manifested itself in Indian history is the cult of *simplicity* and the cult of *asceticism*. The second is perhaps the same as the first, but carried to extremes. Hindus still to-day are apt to show a passion for the simple — for simple clothes, simple houses, for the old ways, for life untroubled by elaborate organisation. When this exceeds a certain degree of austerity it takes the form of religious mendicancy and absolute renunciation of the world. Such a cult of sacrifice is not unique to India, and even the wildest extravagances in that country can be paralleled in mediæval Europe ; but in India it persisted

over a far longer period. As in the middle ages in Europe, veneration of the ascetic is combined with a hankering for the extreme forms of pomp ; the Indian mood oscillates perpetually between the two, and not a few princes and ministers have ended their lives, voluntarily, in sackcloth and ashes.

With asceticism is linked the other-worldliness traditional in India, the almost excessive preoccupation with the spiritual life, and the quest for mental tranquillity which throughout history has been the prime motive of Hindu intellectual life.

Of special force in the Indian mind has been the belief in *reincarnation*. This is much more than a reasoned hope or a confident conjecture ; it amounts with the great majority of Hindus to certainty and contrasts strikingly with the Christian attitude. Christians of the present age brought up in Western countries have usually a vaguely defined faith in personal survival but are liable to doubt, and in the words of Dr. Johnson could wish for more convincing proof. To the Hindu on the other hand — to the farmer, artisan, and business man as much as to the pandit — the facts of the spiritual life are more certain, as they are also more interesting, than those of the material world. That the spirit migrates from body to body — that the soul of our grandam may haply inhabit a bird — that this process endures from age to age ending after many aeons in blissful absorption into the general soul of the universe — these are axioms accepted as soon as propounded, so certain that they can bear the weight of all the superstructure of Hindu metaphysics.

In this system of beliefs an essential element is the curious conception of *Karma*. To define it in terms of Western thought is not easy, Karma being sometimes conceived as something almost physical. It appears to be the essence of all the past deeds of a single personality, the clouds of glory or ignominy which the spirit trails from all its previous existences ; it is determined by all the past of the soul and itself determines its future ; and according

to its Karma so is the soul's next incarnation. The man who behaves like a dog will be reincarnated as a dog ; the Brahman who neglects his duty is born again as an untouchable ; while to the untouchable who patiently accepts his lot there opens out the happy possibility of rebirth as a Brahman. The belief in reincarnation combined with the belief in Karma seem to have made the Hindu indifferent to the concept of human equality. And indeed, given his premises, it is quite logical that he should be. If every soul is to experience an infinity of lives, and if degradation in any one life is the result of sin in another, then for a man to rebel against his station is senseless or impious.

These are what may be termed the subordinate concepts of Hindu philosophy. The master concept, the one in whose light all others must be reviewed, is that of *illusion*. Having erected the most intricate metaphysics known to man, having mapped in precise terms all the mysteries of creation, the Hindu concludes that, in the last analysis, all is illusion, including his own personality, his reason, and his system of philosophy. Sankara, the greatest of Hindu philosophers, said in a vivid phrase that as certain doings of princes who have no desires left unfulfilled seem to refer to no purpose but to proceed from ' mere sportfulness ', so is the universe the sport of the deity — without purpose and without reality. This sense of illusion has for generations haunted the Hindu mind, and to suppose that it has been of significance merely in academic thought is a great mistake. In India philosophy was pursued with more fervour than in the West, was taken as the basis of action, and thus deeply influenced human conduct. Nobody who to the inmost of his being is convinced of the unreality of his surroundings acts in quite the same way as those who take the universe at its face value. It is of course possible to exaggerate the extent to which metaphysical speculation even in India is reflected in practical affairs ; yet no student of Indian history can fail to notice its constant intrusion into the

picture, and the way in which it has permeated the world of action.

All these concepts are of very ancient origin. They can be traced in the earliest philosophical literature. And it must be added that in more recent centuries the Indian mind has added little that is new to its ancient systems. Its most strenuous intellectual exertions belong to the period of world history which saw also the development of the Hellenic and Confucian systems of philosophy, and though Indian thought continued to be very fertile until well on in the Christian era it seems that the philosopher Sankara was the last of the metaphysical giants. His date is uncertain but is probably not later than the eighth century. Thenceforward Indian civilisation underwent a change and the Indian mind, though preserving its unworldly bent, found satisfaction increasingly in devotional and less and less in speculative exercise. It was indeed a change not altogether unlike that which took place in Europe when the metaphysical interests of the Neoplatonists gave way to the practice of the religious life of mediæval times. But in India there has been no subsequent intellectual renaissance or *Aufklärung*.

6

Hinduism is a civilisation which, though it included much injustice and oppression, and though in many ways it stunted and repressed human freedom, was nevertheless, at least until the most recent period, freely accepted by nearly all those brought up under its influence. Hinduism satisfied them, covered the mind with a sort of blanket, and left little desire for revolt. Though there were countless movements for reform there was seldom indignant repudiation, and this was perhaps because there was no orthodoxy. It is hard to quarrel with the colour of a chameleon ; Hinduism was the sum-total of the ideas, often contradictory, the manners, and the institutions of the community. It was the sea in which all Hindus swam,

the air which they all breathed, whatever the caste to which they might belong. Though Brahmans and untouchables held ideas which were poles apart, though their way of life was altogether dissimilar, though they avoided contact with one another, and though the Brahman thought of the untouchable as a kind of leper, yet each recognised the other as a Hindu, each felt himself to belong to a system, and each was more or less satisfied with his place. As the national culture was for China so was Hinduism for Hindu India — something which moulded the life of the people, and to rebel against which was almost the same as to repine at the natural world, at the sun, moon, stars, and the other facts of nature.

This serene unanimity was disturbed by the irruption of alien ideas and an alien creed. This was Islam. Beginning in the eleventh century and following the historic North-Western route, Moslem invasion and Moslem proselytism pressed steadily on India. In the thirteenth century a Moslem Empire stretched across all the northern part of the country. In the first half of the sixteenth century there was established the Moghul Empire, the heyday of the Moslem power ; and though with the fall of that régime the political ascendancy of the Moslems was terminated, their place in Indian civilisation was by that time firmly fixed.

The Islamic conquest was responsible for the one set of major changes which occurred in the social and cultural pattern of India between the foundation of the earliest empire in the fourth century B.C. and the coming of the British. But no more remarkable demonstration exists of the strength of Hindusim than the resistance which it made to the Moslem flood. Persia, with one of the most ancient and respectable religions of the world, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Turkestan, Java, all fell before Islam and the overwhelming proportion of their populations became Moslem ; but India though conquered preserved its culture, and the proportion of Moslems to Hindus has never been higher than one to three. Islam has been like

a steady deluge descending on the delicate and intricate structure of Hindu life, and in course of time the downpour has washed away some of its outworks and obliterated some of its subtleties ; but Hinduism remained fundamentally intact.

If India was thus fortunate in saving Hinduism from destruction, it has in the problem of accommodating Hinduism and Islam side by side faced ever since such questions as have tormented few countries. By a peculiar misfortune Islam, like Hinduism, was less a religion than an entire civilisation ; and two ways of life more antipathetic it would have been hard to conceive. Indeed had it been attempted deliberately to frame a culture point by point the opposite of Hinduism no better results could have been achieved than the system of Muhammed. In theological ideas, in legal conceptions, in philosophy of life, in the family organisation, in food, social customs, language, even in clothes, Hindus and Moslems found themselves opposed. Breathing from infancy the axioms of caste, Hindus accepted human inequality as a permanent and inexpugnable fact ; Islam was a levelling religion with a passion for equality by which even its monarchs were periodically humbled. Hinduism, if in its purest form neither idolatrous nor polytheist, permitted among its rank and file the crudest forms of worship ; Islam has always been iconoclast. In spite of the worldly display of India, Hinduism honoured the ascetic and was awed by the other-worldly ; Islam, in spite of its puritan sects, was a voluptuous religion. The emotional impulse of Hinduism was the quest for tranquillity ; of Islam (in spite of *Kismet*) the lust for action. Hinduism was subtle, elaborate, luxuriant ; Islam plain and unadorned.

That the two cultures interacted and modified one another goes without saying. For example, where Islam flourished the caste system weakened ; and under Hindu influence Islam lost something of its asperity. In the centuries when Turks, Afghans, and Moghuls dominated North India the upper classes of both communities came

closer together, and from their fraternisation emerged for a brief period what may be termed the Urdu culture, a civilisation of the court circles which was a genuine blend of the best in the life of both peoples and by means of which it appeared that they might be reconciled. Among the masses the contact was even closer, since the great bulk of the Moslems of the lower class were converts from the depressed castes of Hindus, and these at least in part retained caste observance, conserved something of the Hindu ritualism which in theory was so abhorrent to their new faith, and refused to be turned from the age-old superstitions of their race. Hindus on the other side adopted Moslem saints as their deities, in some cases permitted Moslems to worship according to Islamic practice in Hindu temples, and in others participated in Moslem festivals ; and to the detriment of their intellectual life adopted the Moslem custom of *purdah*. But the *rapprochement* never amounted to fusion. The communities were too unlike to be fitted together. On both sides there remained solid blocs of the orthodox — ultra-montane, uninfluenced, intransigent, and capable of developing within themselves fierce proselytising movements in favour of a return to the strictest exclusiveness.[1]

Bitter though the communal feeling would have been in any circumstances, it was exacerbated by the caste system, which of all the institutions of Hinduism was the one most fatal in consequences. If caste made it difficult for Hindus to associate freely with one another, still more did it set a partition between them and non-Hindu peoples ; and if caste gave the Hindus the strength to

[1] There was a rather striking parallel in the history of the Ottoman Empire. At one time Christianity had a strong influence on Ottoman culture. For example, in the seventeenth century a religious movement known as the Bektashi movement was very popular with the janissaries. This was strongly influenced by Christianity and has been described as Sufistic Christianity. At this time Moslems and Christians often revered and made pilgrimages to the same holy places — just as do Moslems and Hindus in India. But later in the Ottoman Empire there was a reversion to strict orthodoxy, and with this the gulf between Moslems and Christians widened, as it widens to-day between Moslems and Hindus.

withstand the Moslem invasion, it was caste also which made the subsequent relations of the communities so dismal and so hostile. Because of caste the Hindus were unapproachable and unaccommodating ; instinctively applying caste categories, they saw the entire Moslem community as a caste subordinate, unclean and untouchable. Thus for centuries India presented the paradoxical sight of an Islamic governing class, with political power almost absolute, ruling over subjects who, though entirely in the hands of their masters, regarded them as unclean, despised them, and thought it as a sin against heaven to be sullied by their touch.

7

What conclusions do we draw from this survey? Brief and sketchy as it is, certain facts stand out. The social organisation of India has been far more complex than the political. The organisation was of a type which did not facilitate but rather increased the difficulties of political organisation. The thought of the country has been turned away from political matters. And the divisions within society were deep and wide.

Caste, communalism, and the absorption of the individual in the affairs of his family — the last a feature of all Asiatic society — have for centuries in India separated men from one another, divided them into rival groups, and prevented them from acquiring that knowledge of and trust in one another which is the best lubricant of political life. Owing to its divisions Indian society could be regarded less as an organic unit than as a number of groups linked almost mechanically together. It lacked cohesion.

Groups of this kind could not but be a weakness in the state. They increased the difficulty of maintaining political unity, and deadened the sense of the common good ; each set its own welfare above the welfare of the state. Such groups are of a totally different kind from the associations which in Western society have acted as a healthy counter-

weight to government. For the groups peculiar to India — caste and the religious community — were groups whose interests were focussed on themselves : they had no programme for society as a whole.

India was certainly not unique in the division of its society into particularist elements. All human society tends to be so divided ; and in the past when government was a simpler business than at present it was possible to accommodate within the state a number of semi-independent corporations. Even in the West it is only in recent years that forces have begun to work with great pressure for the breaking down of divisions and the welding of the people into a unity. Moreover, a variety and richness in social organisation is by no means to be deplored. The peculiarity of India was that the divisions were deeper, more bitter, and more absolute than in most other countries ; the groups were more egocentric, less aware of one another, less willing to co-operate for the common welfare ; the need was less acutely felt for a central power which should transcend all factional differences ; and the sense of affinity which binds and knits sections and which is the very stuff of a unified society existed, if it existed at all, only in the most rudimentary and primitive form.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REMAKING OF THE POLITICAL PATTERN

I

In the first chapter it has been described how in the eighteenth century India passed through one of its recurrent periods of political confusion. The Moghul Empire had fallen ; central authority lapsed ; a shocking anarchy spread through the country. Such a state of affairs was, as we have seen, by no means new in Indian history, and according to past experience would sooner or later have been terminated by the emergence of a power able to re-establish at least the semblance of imperial rule. Indeed there were signs that the extraordinary and warlike Hindu people of central India, the Marathas, were on their way to fulfilling the traditional role ; and thus imperial sovereignty would have passed back again from the Moslems to the Hindus. But events took another course. The empire was restored not by a local power but, as had more than once before happened in Indian history, by a people from outside. These were the British ; and thus began that strange association between countries so dissimilar, so remote from one another in history and traditions — an association which has brought to each profound changes in its internal and international situation, and which to-day, though changing in character, is, it may be hoped, by no means ending, but rather beginning a new phase pregnant with even more fruitful consequences than in the past.

The story of the British conquest has been often told. Let us trace what happened. When owing to its internal decay the Moghul Empire collapsed, there were, scattered in the coastal areas, a number of small communities of

foreign traders, French, Dutch, and English. These with the spread of disorder were compelled to turn their counting-houses into forts, and insensibly they became a political power. Then as the result of the politics of Europe so many thousands of miles away they found themselves at war with one another. In the prosecution of hostilities they enlisted the support of the neighbouring princes who had set up their thrones on the ruins of the Moghul Empire. In such conflicts the British after varying fortunes proved victorious ; and their success, though few realised it at the time, had wider consequences than the mere elimination of their commercial rivals. For as a result of these petty wars the British found themselves inextricably caught up in the world of Indian politics. Within a generation they had become the paramount power and to all intents and purposes sat in the seat of the Moghuls.

The explanation of this remarkable revolution by which a mere trading company was turned into the greatest imperial power since the Spanish conquistadores is really quite simple. Its history though dramatic is not unique. More than one great empire in history has come into being not because its constructors planned so great an enterprise but because, having once created order in a small corner of the world, they were led on by the need of protecting their handiwork to the creation of order in all their frontiers. In doing so they have felt themselves under the compulsion of events and followed with reluctance the path along which they nevertheless found themselves impelled, and while all the time expanding they have been genuinely apprehensive at the commitments which they were undertaking. Indeed the apologetic and expostulatory empire-builder is one of the stock characters of the ironic drama which is world history ; the subduer of continents is less often a resolute hero than an unwilling victim who has got caught in the bog. Such it seems was the true state of the East India Company. The triumph of the Company was the result of no organised intention

of the British Government or people. It was not even sought by the Company itself. The governing facts were the search by the Company for a stable frontier to its dominions, the lack of any strong national feeling in India, and the superiority in political organisation of the Company over all the native principalities.[1] Once the Company had started on its political career it grew and swelled and became sovereign in India because it nowhere met any opposition, any effective check.[2] Bacon observed of the Roman Empire : " Rome did not grow upon the world ; the world grew upon the Romans ". In the same way it may be said that India swallowed the Company rather than that the Company swallowed India.

It was for these reasons that Professor Seeley, one of the surprisingly neglected historians of the nineteenth century, suggested that to speak of a British conquest of India was to misunderstand *ab initio* the foundation of the British Raj. Conquest, according to him, implied an aggressive action by one nation against another, but in India in the eighteenth century there was no united nation to be subdued. And the Company was not the British nation. Rather it was itself an Indian power. It used Indian officials ; a French traveller at the beginning of the nineteenth century covered five hundred miles in Bengal without seeing a single European administrator. It fought its battles chiefly with Indian troops. These felt no dishonour in serving it. The native princes did not scruple to ally themselves with it. Though it encountered organised resistance from the Marathas and from other Indian states, these do not seem to have felt themselves

[1] The superiority in organisation was of much greater account than the mere technical superiority in weapons of war. The armies of the main Indian powers were equipped with artillery imported from Europe, and were often trained by European officers.

[2] Malcolm : " The truth is that from the day on which the Company's troops marched one mile from their factories, the increase of their territories and their armies became a principle of self-preservation ". This was written early in the nineteenth century. The Company had to expand for self-defence : and it found it easy to expand because of the weakness of its neighbours.

the champions of India against the foreigner. Thus the rise of the Company to power was the rise of an Indian state to supremacy over its rivals — an event which had often occurred before and which had been the genesis of some of India's greatest empires.

Seeley's views deserve more careful attention than they have recently received. In his celebrated book *The Expansion of England* he wrote :

If we were justified, which we are not, in personifying India as we personify France or England, we could not describe her as overwhelmed by a foreign enemy, we should rather have to say that she elected to put an end to anarchy by submitting to a single Government, even though that Government was in the hands of foreigners. . . . Now this is not a foreign conquest but rather an internal revolution. . . . Let us imagine for a moment that the merchants who rose to power had not been foreign at all -- the nature of the event is not thereby altered. We may suppose that a number of Parsee merchants in Bombay, tired of the anarchy which disturbed their trade, had subscribed together to establish fortresses and raise troops, and then that they had the good fortune to employ able generals. In that case they too might have had their Plassey and their Buxar. In that case we should have had substantially the same event, but it would have appeared clearly in its true light. We should have recognised it as having the nature of an internal revolution, as being the effect of the natural struggle which every community makes to put down the anarchy which is tearing it to pieces.

Seeley's avowed aim was to take away something of the glamour and romance from the story of the British occupation of India, and he remarks that in the catalogue of spectacular adventurers Clive and Wellesley compare poorly with Cortes and Pizarro.[1] But notice also what he says a little later in his book :

Nevertheless there is a sense in which the British government of India is not only wonderful, but far more wonderful than is commonly understood. It is wonderful rather in its consequences than in its causes. In other words, it is great

[1] This is, of course, all to the credit of the British adventurers.

in the peculiarly historical sense, for the pregnancy of events is what gives them rank. . . . We shall be prepared to place it among the transcendent events of the world, those events which rise as high above the average of civilised history as an oriental conquest falls below it.

It is the study of this ' transcendent event ' and not a description of a somewhat equivocal triumph of British arms which is the theme of this chapter.

2

There are many facts about the British Raj upon which it would be interesting to dwell. There is for example the study of the mind of the administrators who built up the political system.[1] There is the study of the relation in that system between English and Indians. Though the number of British officials in the Government of India was almost unbelievably small (never it seems above two thousand) these until recent times monopolised most of the highest positions in the administration. But in the last two or three decades Indians have to an increasing extent held all the higher administrative offices, including membership of the Viceroy's Council ; and there has at last come about that state of affairs the absence of which in their time was deplored by Bryce and Lord Cromer, the fusion of British and Indians in the imperial service, in the same way as Italians, Greeks, Britons, Spaniards, and Gauls were fused in the service of ancient Rome.

To trace in closer detail such likenesses and contrasts between the Roman Empire and the British Empire in India would indeed be full of instruction. To more than one visitor to India it has seemed that he was touching a political structure made of essentially the same stuff as ancient Rome ; and incidentally from a study of the daily

[1] Special profit would be found in a study of the careers of Warren Hastings, Munro, Elphinstone, Malcolm, and the Lawrences. Among eminent men who at one time played with the idea of entering the service of the Company are Bismarck and Shelley. It is interesting to speculate on what might have been their careers.

problems of the British magistrate a new and vivid light has been thrown on the minds and duties of procurators and proconsuls. The same kind of fascination which overcame Gibbon and countless others in contemplating the fabric of the Roman Empire has often fastened upon those who have allowed themselves to dwell upon the grandiose achievement of the establishment of a common system of law and public order over the vast Indian sub-continent.

It would be timely to weigh up the pros and cons of that feature of British policy in which it has most nearly resembled that of Rome — the caution and conservatism in dealing with matters of religion and custom. Still more profitable would it be to examine the causes of that feature of the British record which most sharply distinguishes it from the record of Rome. This is the British racial aloofness and the racial estrangement between the dominant power and its subjects. There has never grown up between Englishmen and Indians the community of life which was the priceless possession of the inhabitants of the Roman world. Why the British, who in their record of Empire have succeeded in so much, have here failed so lamentably it is hard to say. The matter needs much study. Perhaps an enquiry would be aided if on one side there were set a pen portrait of the Indian as he has appeared to the British in India, on the other a portrait of the Englishman as he appears to the Indian. From the distortions and caricature which each would find in the picture drawn by the other he would learn caution in his own judgments.[1]

It would be important to notice that in spite of such personal misunderstandings the rule of Great Britain was never until recent times unpopular. The Mutiny was a

[1] Many Indians sincerely believe that the average Englishman by nature is grasping in money matters, given to sexual excess, and still more to gluttony and drinking, and is generally insensitive to things of the spirit. The *idée fixe* of one people about another is an important factor in politics. With the Indian portrait of the British it is interesting to compare the Chinese. The popular mind of China has formed an equally uncomplimentary picture of Englishmen, and believes that they all possess bright red hair, watery blue eyes, and are bibulous and irascible.

military revolt, not a movement of the people. Thus the British Government rested upon consent to at least as great an extent as any Asiatic rule.

Especially illuminating would be a study of the actual ways in which British influence has been brought to bear on India. We should notice how different were the influences emitted by the patrician rural country of the eighteenth century from those by the industrial democracy of to-day. We should try to disentangle the thousand invisible, almost gossamer, grapples which England has thrown over Indian life. Especially we should bear in mind that the consequences brought about by deliberate governmental action are only a part of the consequences of the British connection, and that no less important have been the influence of missionaries, of the non-official British community resident in India (small in numbers though this has always been), of the ideas, political and philosophical, current in British society and propagated as a result in India, and of the economic forces which were generated by the political union of the two countries and which operated so powerfully to change the structure of Indian society. Similarly we should seek to notice what have been the influences by India upon Great Britain, from the time when the wealth of the nabobs threatened the ruin of Westminster[1] down to the present time when our democracy seeks to transform empire into commonwealth.

Another subject which might well draw our attention is the ironical contrast between the august political structure of the British Raj and the culture which it sheltered; and we might recollect with what uniformity those who have made flying visits to the country have recorded certain observations. The outward shoddiness of British India has been their constant theme. A railway service which if comfortable appeared the shabbiest in Asia; accommodation which recalled the remark of one of the Mutiny journalists that at an Indian hotel there could be obtained

[1] Macaulay described the nabobs as a cross between Monsieur Jourdain and Richard III.

a bedstead, a bottle of soda-water, and everything brought in one's luggage ; European houses apparently designed to prevent the enervation of the ruling race ; Indian houses which were the visible sign of a philosophy which regarded all worldly comfort as a snare and a delusion — these were the stock in trade of the commentators. Nor did they fail to find amusement in the manners of the ruling race. The European society in India was one which enjoyed many of the privileges and displayed some of the virtues of an aristocracy but which was deficient in its graces. The typical figures were the employee of a mercantile company and the army officer. "Indian Society", said Lord Bryce, writing at the beginning of the century, "smells of gunpowder." Except among the officials of the Indian Civil Service, a handful of the European population, the standard of education was not strikingly high ; and even the civil servants were often content to let their curiosity repose. It is true that scattered through the services — perhaps in a higher proportion than in any other similar bureaucracy — there were personalities distinguished for unusual ability, scholarship, or eccentricity. Especially during the middle of the nineteenth century there had been a succession of unusually gifted men who produced a remarkable corpus of works on India, historical, descriptive, and anthropological ; but this race dwindled with the years. In the small town, the typical centre of Anglo-Indian civilisation, society has been limited to the collector, the judge, and the surgeon, whose families were bored and irritated with each other and who in conversation had long since exhausted every subject of mutual interest except speculation upon service transfers and promotions. The stir of Europe and of the outer world was too distant and too vaguely apprehended to rouse more than occasional comment ; and the civil servant who retired to England became proverbial as bringing with him the ideas of the previous generation.[1]

[1] Writing about a hundred years ago, Miss Eden, sister of the Viceroy, Lord Auckland, describes as follows an up-country station : "The whole

All these are attractive subjects for study and reflection. But in this chapter they do not concern us : here the theme is limited to the changes which under the British Raj have taken place in the political structure of the country.

3

The bare facts of the political history of the British Raj can be briefly stated. From the middle of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth, British power in India was constantly expanding. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a great experimental activity in devising the administrative machinery. In 1857 occurred the Mutiny, causing an estrangement of British and Indians which was to have deplorable consequences. Immediately afterwards the government was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown. The next two or three decades were relatively uneventful ; some claim to detect in this period the signs of an ossification of the régime. In the eighties began in earnest the Indian nationalist movement, the result of the spread to India of the nationalist ideas which had been born in Europe and which later swept the whole world. In response to this movement Great Britain from 1892 onwards has sought to fashion in

concern consists of five bungalows. There are three married residents : one lady has bad spirits and she has never been seen ; another has weak eyes and wears a large shade about the size of a common verandah ; and the other has bad health and has had her head shaved. The Doctor and our friend make up the rest of the society. He goes every morning to hear cases between natives about strips of land or a few rupees — that lasts till five ; then he rides about an uninhabitated jungle until seven ; dines ; reads a book or magazine when he can find one ; then goes to bed. A lively life with the thermometer at several hundred ! " In the course of the subsequent century the European society failed to increase in liveliness. If anything it became more formal, since the British adopted among themselves a caste system. The official dwelt in a gilded ghetto into which the teacher and the missionary no more presumed to intrude than did the untouchable into the house of the Brahman. The order of precedence settled nicely the status of every resident, and the travelling visitor whose place was unknown and who did not know his place could not but feel himself a foreign body disturbing the smooth working of the social machine.

India the basis for parliamentary self-government.

Such have been the principal events. But a chronological survey is not the best means of studying the revolution in Indian political life. A better way is to take our stand at the present day at the end of the long transition, and to seek to discern how modern India has come to differ from the India described in the previous chapters.

At first sight we find fewer changes than we might have expected. In the administration we are surprised indeed at how much of the old system is still recognisable in the new. The reason for this continuity is, however, not far to seek. The East India Company, when it took over the administration of the territories which fell before its arms, had conceived its main interest to be the maintenance in the simplest manner possible of the peace and security which best promoted trade. To this end it sought to govern by means of the political machinery which it found to hand, repairing it where it was in decay, improving it where minor changes would clearly bring increased efficiency, eliminating such of the apparatus as grated upon humanitarian sentiment, but innovating only where a pressing need demanded a pressing solution. These traditions persisted even after the transfer of government to the Crown. Thus the British Raj continued, at least during the nineteenth century, to rest on the same pillars as its predecessors, on the fiscal system, the army, and the intelligence corps. The fiscal arrangements until quite recent times have been those of the Moghuls reformed and elaborated, many times more efficient but developed from a pattern which was Indian rather than English. A certain pomp maintained by the British viceroy and governors is Indian in origin : so also is the admirable custom by which district officers are accessible to the meanest subject and appear in person to receive petitions and hear complaints : so also the less admirable feature of the unity of the executive and the subordinate branches of the judiciary. It is true that as we look closer we

notice that the machine of government has acquired new parts, that it works with an efficiency it never attained in the earlier empires, that its officers obey standards hitherto undreamed of in Indian public life, that it is used for new and often beneficent purposes, that if it was designed for a tyranny the spirit behind it has changed radically. Yet the apparatus of administration is even to-day strongly reminiscent of the Indian past.

This is the substance in Seeley's remarks when he described the Government of India as one "which is utterly un-English, which is bureaucratic . . . which rests mainly on military force, which raises its revenue not in the European fashion but by taking the place of a universal landlord, and in a hundred other ways departs from the traditions of England".

All this is true: but the impression of continuity with India's past lasts only as long as we dwell on one particular aspect of government. When we take a more comprehensive view what strikes us more than the continuity is the breach. There have been three events of profound consequence. India has achieved political unity. There has been established the rule of law. And side by side with the antique organs of administrations there have grown up new organs whose provenance is the Anglo-Saxon world, and whose spirit is the antithesis of all that Indian government has signified throughout history: these are representative institutions.

How novel is political unity in India is not always remembered. A cultural unity, in spite of the differences of language, race, and customs in different localities, there had certainly been for many centuries, at least among the Hindu population; a unity closer for example than the rather vague kind which can be detected in contemporary Europe. Wherever Hinduism flourished, Brahmans and cows were sacred, and the caste system prevailed. But politically the usual fate of India, as we saw in Chapter One, was to be divided into parochial states; and even the Moghuls united only a part of the country. In con-

trast the British Raj welded the sub-continent into a single political entity.[1] From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin it was united in a common allegiance. In the English language it was provided for the first time in history with a common political speech. And political unity was reinforced by an increasing unification of economic life. Thus as far as the mechanical structure of politics is concerned the Indian peoples were given the opportunity of becoming at last a united nation — though whether a sufficient time has yet elapsed for advantage of this opportunity to be effectively taken it is too early to say.

With political unity has come a deeper internal calm than has ever been known before. Never before has India for so long a time been virtually free from bandits or have communications been so free and unimpeded. To travel, as has been possible for nearly a century, from Ceylon to Peshawar without danger, without escort, and without paying internal tolls, is a thing new in Indian history. It is the realisation of the dream of the early political philosophers who looked for a *chakravartin* who should establish a ' king's peace ' throughout Aryavarta.

The next major change is that the administration has come to be governed by the principle known comprehensively as the ' rule of law '. Aristotle described the rule of law as the rule of reason unaffected by desire. " He who bids the law rule ", he wrote, " may be deemed to bid God and reason alone rule, but he who bids a man rule adds an element of the beast. . . . The rule of law is preferable to that of any individual. . . . There may be cases where the law seems unable to determine, but in such cases can a man ? " The rule of law provides that the actions of government should be determined not by caprice but by the law of the land, administered in the public courts by judges independent of the executive. If

[1] It is true that the Indian States do not form part of the Empire. But neither have they retained their sovereign independence. See Chapter Seven.

this principle was not unknown to Indian philosophy it had previously been foreign to Indian political practice. But to-day it dominates all public affairs;[1] and how great is the revolution that has been thus effected becomes clear when it is recalled that previously the main characteristic of Indian political organisation had been the unbridled exercise of power.

A change of a cognate kind was the introduction of the concept that as the pattern of society was based on law so it could be changed by a change in law. The importance of this it is not easy for a Westerner of the twentieth century to grasp, since it is always difficult to realise that ideas which seem to-day to be commonplaces may at other times not have existed. It seems that the traditional conception of law in India was that God had spoken through the mouth of the early law-givers and that the business of the state was to administer the revealed code. This was as true of purely political regulations as of moral behaviour. The state was a vessel sailing according to fixed rules inherited from antiquity, and it never occurred to the officers that the cut of the craft might be changed or the method of locomotion experimented with. A pious emperor like Asoka might exhort his subjects to right conduct; a government might issue particular *ad hoc* commands which if well conceived might be taken up by society in its customary behaviour; but the state never claimed to lay down in general terms, still less to alter, the rules for the ordering of society. The revolution which has occurred during the past decades has been that the weapon of legislation, previously a kind of Excalibur which profane and secular hands dared not touch, was drawn from its rock and placed in the hands of the government.

As the complement of this change of the place of law

[1] In British India the subordinate part of the judiciary continued to be linked with the executive. But in theory, and probably in most cases also in practice, the officer who combined these functions took care that in his judicial capacity he was not influenced by considerations rising out of his executive duties.

in Indian social life India has come to possess the most monumental legal codes to be found in Asia. Furthermore there has come into being an elaborate judiciary. That the law courts have their shortcomings nobody would deny — the important fact is that they exist, and that in spite of the spasmodic interest of Indian sovereigns in doing justice nothing comparable existed under the old régimes. They have been one of the chief theatres for the display of individual talent. And in their service there has grown up a professional class which, though to-day it is denounced by the nationalists as parasitic, has discharged a role of great public advantage. It may be true that it has absorbed a disproportionate share of the national income — the rows of motor-cars outside a court-house in any provincial town shows in a striking way the concentration of wealth in the hands of the local bar. But in a polity which is dominated by law the barrister is an effective and useful check on the government servant. In a well-governed state the one is the complement to the other. And especially before the extension of the powers of the legislatures, the bar in India acted as the main political opposition.

4

The last of the three principal innovations has been the introduction of representative institutions.

These are perhaps the strangest of all the additions to the Indian political scene. To-day there exist municipal councils, county councils, provincial assemblies, a central assembly. There are members of the Legislative Assembly, parliamentary ministers and secretaries, speakers, whips — beings who a hundred years ago would in India have been regarded as fabulous monsters. There are constituences, franchise qualifications, a new political vocabulary, and a new political etiquette. The spectacle is sufficiently curious. On to a society which in many features recalls the time of Pliny and Herodotus

there has been grafted the ballot-box and the election agent.[1]

Against the broad background of Indian history this is so sudden and startling a manifestation that it is as if the Government had sown dragons' teeth. But the growth of the new institutions has of course been by stages. Its story can be briefly told. The germ is to be found in an Act of 1853 establishing a Legislative Council which was to consist of the members of the Executive Council — the cabinet of the Governor-General and the prime organ of government in India — together with six additional members, all of them officials and all nominated. In 1861 the number of additional members was increased to twelve, and it was provided that half should be non-official. Similar bodies were set up in the provinces. It is true that these were nominated bodies, but from them much was to grow. Attention was next turned to local government, and in the eighties there were set up local councils both in the towns and in rural areas, the majority of their members being elected and not nominated. In 1892 the elective principle was partially introduced in the composition of the provincial legislative councils and the central council. In 1909 the powers of these institutions were greatly extended, the franchise was considerably broadened, and the number of elected members in the provincial councils was increased so that they commanded a majority. In 1919 there was a further step forward. By the curious, maligned, but not ill-contrived system which acquired the name 'dyarchy', the government in the provinces was made partially responsible to the provincial legislatures. At the same time the central assembly was enlarged, made bicameral, and its powers increased. Finally by the great Act of 1935 there was reached the goal of full parliamentary government in the provinces: and at the centre provision was made for 'dy-

[1] Some Indian historians would deny that representative institutions are alien to the Indian tradition. But the case has been fairly stated by Lord Hailey, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 87, pp. 539-45.

archy' on somewhat similar lines to those which had in the previous fifteen years been followed in the provinces.

These institutions are all derived from Anglo-Saxon experience. Almost without reflection the Government assumed that if India was to enjoy a liberal system, the one most suitable to copy was that of Great Britain. India's political life is like a transfer impressed on India as the result of the British connection.

5

In introducing these pregnant reforms the British were guided by their instinct to link the government with the governed. Their own parliamentary and liberal traditions led them to feel a certain discomfort at the autocratic system of government which they had taken over from the Moghuls. They felt rightly that a government which had no roots in popular support was a weak, precarious structure. Hence their anxiety to associate the educated classes with the administration.

At first the Government intended that this should be only in a consultative capacity. This was stated quite clearly in order that undue expectations should not be roused. But the institutions which to this end they brought into being all made for an eventual further liberalisation. Representative institutions are like tadpoles which if they survive their infancy end by changing their nature as the result of an inner urge. So it was in India. Once the first assembly had come into being the logical end was Indian home rule. The British deliberately fostered the growth of political organs which were bound to end by superseding their own administration. Nor did they fail to recognise this. On the contrary they proclaimed it as the goal of their policy. At first, it is true, the goal was dimly perceived. British policy in India has been pursued in a groping, tentative, cautious way, and only as the years passed did the parties formulate clearly what were their intentions. But none the less

the policy was coherent and continuous. And in the end it received explicit statement. This was in the celebrated pledge of August 1917 :

> The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

It is not to be pretended that all British administrators and all who have been concerned with British policy have been sympathetic with this programme. Indeed some of those actually engaged in the government of India have developed frankly Oriental conceptions of the relation of ruler and subject. A few have been resolved to secure the continuance of British political supremacy simply from the belief that it was Britain's role to dominate ; others out of a genuine scepticism as to India's ability to maintain on its own the law and order of the British Raj ; and among these last have been some of the most selfless and devoted servants of India to whom the country owes much of its present well-being. It is not unnatural that these, who after a lifetime spent in Indian administration could rightly feel themselves to be experts in their subject, were often inclined to regard the home government as a kind of one-eyed Cyclops which meddled with matters which it did not understand, and saw in this a case of

> Folly doctor-like controlling skill.

Their mouthpiece was Kipling, and his outburst against Pagett, M.P., voiced a century of irritation.

These dissidents, important as their influence has been at certain periods, possessed, however, only limited power in the framing of British policy. Behind them was another and greater influence. This was the influence of the British parliament, the British public, and British ideas ; and of all the influences which went to determining the

fortunes of India in the past century and a half this has proved the most decisive. It was anything but 'imperialist'. Few things in the history of empire have been so singular or indeed ironical as the way in which the British people, the builders of the largest empire in history, have seemed over long periods to be almost unconscious of what they had achieved, or to be anxious deliberately to ignore it; they have been imperialist with less than half their mind. Through the enterprise of some of their compatriots they found themselves sovereign over India; but they were never, except perhaps for a short period at the close of the nineteenth century, fervently attached to imperial ideas, and never regarded their domination of India as anything but extraneous to their real concerns, as a gratifying circumstance yet essentially a luxury and probably a transient one. Their attitude could be summed up as follows: "We find ourselves in India. We cannot leave because it is not the nature of governments to withdraw from a country when there is no alternative government to take its place. And as long as we have responsibility we will not tolerate disorder or mutiny. But nothing is further from our desire than a permanent continuance of the present system. We welcome every sign that India is moving towards a system of government such as we enjoy in this country. Far be it from us to thwart such a development. Have we not given a clear token of our intentions by fostering the growth of universities which are devoting themselves to the spread of ideas of liberalism and nationalism? Do we not acquiesce in the young men of India seeking inspiration from Shelley and Mill, and have we interfered because they made heroes of Mazzini and Garibaldi? We look forward to an enduring intimacy between England and India. But the present relation of protector and dependency must eventually change to a partnership of equals."

It cannot be denied that much of this liberal outlook of parliament and public was extremely facile, and was

rooted in ignorance of India's circumstances. Often it sprang rather from an indifference to the Indian question than from genuine sympathy with the Indian peoples. Yet whatever the motives of Great Britain, the important fact is the policy itself. Parliament undeniably planned the eventual achievement by India of a status equal to that of its masters.

This aspect of the British Raj has in recent years been obscured by the propaganda of the nationalists. They have represented the British Empire in India as purely autocratic: and some Englishmen, anxious for the most conciliatory and sympathetic relations with them, have acquiesced in this view. Yet nothing is ever really gained by a distortion of the truth. Myths are never golden; much of the present bad blood is the result of this unhappy fabrication of history. Perhaps the best way of setting things in a truer light is to let Parliament speak for itself. The debates on India over a period of a hundred and fifty years form an impressive symposium of which Great Britain to-day has no reason to be ashamed. Let us consider one or two extracts; or let us rather construct a kind of cinema picture of the British Parliament in session upon Indian affairs. The first scene is the House of Lords: the date is 1788: the first of the long line of Governor-Generals is being prosecuted for high crimes and misdemeanours: Burke destroys for all time the idea that British officials abroad may seek to govern the country by Oriental means.

My lords, you have now heard the principles upon which Mr. Hastings governs the part of Asia subjected to the British Empire. . . .

Here he has declared his opinion that he is a despotic prince, that he is to use arbitrary powers; and of course all his acts are covered with that shield. " I know ", says he, " the constitution of Asia only from its practices." Will your lordships ever bear the corrupt practices of mankind made the principles of government? It will be your pride and glory to teach men that they are to conform their practices to principles, and not to draw their principles from the corrupt practices of any man

whatever. Was there ever heard, or could it be conceived, that a man would dare to mention the practices of all the villains, all the mad usurpers, all the thieves and robbers, in Asia, that he should gather them all up, and form the whole mass of abuses into one code and call it the duty of a British governor ? I believe that till this time so audacious a thing was never attempted by mankind.

The next scene is forty-five years later. It is 1833. A new bill for the Government of India is before the House of Commons. It is introduced by the historian Macaulay.

There is one part of the Bill on which I feel myself irresistibly impelled to say a few words. I allude to that wise, that benevolent, that noble clause, which enacts that no native of our Indian Empire shall, by reason of his colour, his descent, or his religion, be incapable of holding office. At the risk of being called by that nickname which is regarded as the most opprobrious of all nicknames by men of selfish hearts and contracted minds — at the risk of being called a philosopher — I may say that, to the last day of my life, I shall be proud of having been one of those who assisted in the framing of the Bill which contains that clause. We are told that the time can never come when the natives of India can be admitted to high civil and military office. We are told that this is the condition on which we hold our power. We are told that we are bound to confer on our subjects — every benefit which they are capable of enjoying ? — no — which it is in our power to confer on them ? — no — but which we can confer on them without hazard to our own domination. Against that proposition I solemnly protest as inconsistent alike with sound policy and sound morality.

The destinies of our Indian Empire are covered with thick darkness. It is difficult to form any conjecture as to the fate reserved for a state which resembles no other in history, and which forms by itself a separate class of political phenomena. The laws which regulate its growth and its decay are still unknown to us. It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system ; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government ; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever

come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history. To have found a great people sunk in the lowest depths of slavery and superstition, to have so ruled them as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens, would indeed be a title to glory all our own. The sceptre may pass away from us. Unforeseen accidents may derange our most profound schemes of policy. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverses. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism ; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.

Twenty-three years pass, and these principles are solemnly reaffirmed in the Proclamation of Queen Victoria :

We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects. . . . And it is our will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge.

Half a century passes. Then Lord Morley, speaking in the House of Lords, introduces the legislation of 1909 :

There are two rival schools, one of which believes that better government of India depends on efficiency, and that efficiency is in fact the end of our rule in India. The other school, while not neglecting efficiency, looks also to what is called political concessions. . . . I am as much for efficiency as the noble lord [Curzon], but I do not believe — and this is the difference between him and myself — that you can have true, solid, endurable efficiency without what are called political concessions. I know risks are pointed out. The late Lord Salisbury, speaking on the last Indian Councils Bill, spoke of the risks of applying occidental machinery in India. Well, we ought to have thought of that before we applied occidental education ; we applied that, and occidental machinery must follow.

In 1919 comes the legislation establishing dyarchy. There is opposition from many of the experts. Parliament overrules them. The Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, says :

I implore this House to show to India to-day that Parliament is receptive of the case for self-government and only seeks an opportunity of completing it by the demonstrable realisation of the success of its stages. . . . Here is a country desirous of achieving nationality. . . . Let us pass this Bill and start it, under the aegis of the British flag, on the road which we ourselves have travelled. . . . If you do that, if you pass this Bill, I can say — we can say — as I should like to say with the authority of the House to the peoples of India, " The future and the date upon which you realise the future goal of self-government are with you. . . . You will find in Parliament every desire to help and to complete the task which this Bill attempts, if you devote yourself to use with wisdom, with self-restraint, with respect for minorities, the great opportunities with which Parliament is entrusting you." That is the message which it seems to me — I say it with all deference — this House should send to the Indian peoples to-day.

It happens that all the speakers quoted belong to the Whig or Liberal parties. But it must not be thought that the Liberal policy towards India was the monopoly of any one party. The Act of 1892 was introduced by a Conservative government (being brought forward in the House of Commons by no less a Tory than Lord Curzon) and in our own time the Act of 1935 was the work of a coalition government which was predominantly Conservative. During the debates on that measure speaker after speaker on the Conservative side reaffirmed the faith of the earlier parliaments. Small groups apart, the general sense of both Houses of Parliament and of the public was that India should be brought, so far as it lay within British power to accomplish, to its full stature of independent nationhood. Of a desire to treat India as a subject country, of a determination to maintain autocratic government, there was hardly a trace. And in the years which have passed since, disappointing though in some respects

they have been, the attitude has become if anything yet more fundamentally liberal, yet more sympathetic to the transfer of British responsibility to Indian self-governing institutions.

It is not pretended that the British Government surrendered its power step by step unbidden and unpressed. To have done so would indeed have been absurd, for the demand for reform by a wide section of the people is the indispensable preliminary of change. If the demand for reform is not necessarily a proof that the reforms are fitting, it is certain that reforms which were not demanded would have been radically unfitting. The Acts of 1909, 1919, and 1935 were preceded by formidable, even revolutionary, political movements. But what is important is that the British Government showed itself responsive to public opinion once it was unmistakably expressed, that if it took firm measures against lawless action yet it never tried to stem the current of the times, and that the ideas inspiring the agitation were themselves of British origin.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REMAKING OF THE SOCIAL PATTERN

POLITICAL change was not the only change. It was interlocked with changes in the economic and social structure and in the intellectual climate.

I

Perhaps the most graphic way of portraying the metamorphosis which has taken place is to take the India described by Bernier — a picture of the seventeenth century but probably valid for much of the previous thousand years or more — and to compare it with the India of to-day. What impressed Bernier was the lack of economic enterprise, the neglect to exploit the natural resources, the badness of communications, the meanness of the towns, the amount of fertile land uncultivated, the appalling ravages of famine, and the general disorder and backwardness of economic life. To-day he would need to give a very different account. The country is covered with a network of railways, roads, telegraphs, banks, commodity and stock exchanges — all the apparatus of a complex and delicate economic system; in many regions agriculture has changed from a subsistence to a commercial basis; a great foreign trade has developed.[1] India's industry is ranked by the International Labour Office as the eighth largest in the world.

How is the transformation to be explained? The newborn spirit of enterprise among Indians themselves, the example of the rest of the world, the Zeitgeist — all these

[1] In the time of Akbar, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, India's exports amounted to not more than 36,000 tons. This is the calculation of Mr. Moreland (*India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 227-39). In 1938–9 the shipping cleared from Indian ports was returned at 9.7 million tons.

have been factors. But perhaps the chief cause is to be found in the political changes described in the last chapter. Let us trace this sequence in more detail. Under the British system peace prevailed over all the sub-continent ; roads were safe, tolls were down, India became one of the largest areas in the world in which there was internal free trade. The frontiers were securely held against the foreign invader. As the spirit of government was slowly changed under the influence of British ideas, so did it put off its former character of a vast consuming organisation and become instead a great creative agency ; whereas under the ancient system its most prominent feature had been its mouth devouring the entire surplus of the country, under the British its hands came into equal notice. It built roads and railways, irrigated huge tracts, turned provinces from areas formerly waste into land teeming with life. At the same time its weight on the common man was relaxed. It neither jealously suspected and prevented private initiative in commerce, nor seized in taxation the profits which rewarded ingenuity and application ; thus for the first time in Indian history the private citizen was given his head. The result was a springing to life in all departments of commerce ; private enterprise built up industry, banks, and the machinery of modern economic activity ; and if at first the lead was taken chiefly by British business men their energy had within two generations been communicated to Indians. In a comparatively short space of time there came almost *ex nihilo* the complex structure of to-day.

A no less striking change than the economic development has been the enrichment and diversification of the class structure. This was in part the natural complement of the economic progress, in part the result of certain government measures which were decided on in order to bring order into the chaotic relationship in the agrarian society. It is true that besides the creation of new classes there has been a destruction of old, and that a *revenant* such as Bernier would find that there has almost vanished

the class with which he himself was most familiar — the courtiers and their hangers-on. If a pale survival of the palace life is to be found in the Indian states, in British India it is extinct. But to compensate this loss — if loss it is — Bernier, if able to traverse to-day the provinces he formerly described, would discover a vigorous and complex social order in the sharpest contrast to the monotonous and unorganised society on whose sad plight he so frequently remarked. In place of the ryots who were little better than the serfs on a governmental plantation there is in many provinces a thriving class of small-holders or yeoman farmers. In place of the weavers and urban craftsmen there is the large and growing industrial proletariat. In place of the Moghul noblemen whose property was held on exceedingly precarious tenure is the class of landed gentry. Most striking change of all, no longer is India notable as in Bernier's time for the lack of a middle order, but its commercial, political, and cultural life is dominated by a middle class which displays many of the characteristics of the European and American bourgeoisie which has given to modern civilisation so many of its peculiar qualities.

Short as has been its history, the middle class has played a part of much importance. It is based on commerce and the professions, especially the profession of law. Educated in schools and universities of a Western type, ambitious, energetic, its members have brought into society the vitality which Bernier found so lacking in Moghul India. They have created what in that empire was unknown, an organised public opinion. It is a curious chance that while the government sought to build up a political class by fostering the growth of a landed gentry, it is this middle class and not the territorial classes which have shown a true political flair. In its role in the state the middle class has been compared to the Roman equestrian order. It has supplied what we saw to be the great want in the Indian polity, a class with the means and the will to check the power of the government.

2

If the polity, the economy, and the class structure have all changed, what of the soul of the country? Have the ancient ideas and institutions and manners which were still so vigorous in Bernier's time undergone the same general transformation? Or has the India of to-day been able to retain something of the way of life which made its culture so distinct from that of its neighbours?

At first what strikes the observer of the contemporary scene is how much of the ancient world still persists. If nearly all of India's four hundred millions are consciously or unconsciously caught up in a general metamorphosis — whether through the change in their economic circumstances, or through the new influences which have entered their lives, or through the new social policy of the government — yet the great majority have responded still very sluggishly to the new stimuli. Partly this has been due to the policy of the government which was to pad the impact of the new — and often to the Indian mind highly uncongenial — forces from outside. Thus in describing India as it still is at the present time it is proper to dwell on this antique side and to give it its due and impressive weight.

It is, for example, necessary to show the masses of the people as still preoccupied with merely local concerns. Their interest is in their crops, in evading taxation, in the rate of interest charged by the money-lenders, in debts, in factions and village disputes, in communal disturbance, in marvels, holy men, and the innumerable powers of evil which must be appeased if calamity is to be averted. The pervasion of all social life by religion must still be stressed. Among both Hindus and Moslems the religious life has followed the established pattern. In both communities the customary new sects have from time to time risen and flourished: and if such a manifestation among the Hindus appears at the moment a little overdue it is premature to say that the teeming mother of Hindu faiths is turning barren. Moslems continue to attend their mosques; Hindus to perform their puja, to go on pilgrimage, to

anoint themselves with sandalwood, to paint their foreheads with caste-marks, to give dinners to Brahmans, to revere the cow, and to perform at least a part of the ritual by which Hindu life is bound. The new technical inventions instead of subverting the ancient civilisation have been utilised by it for its own purposes. Railways carry pilgrims over greater distances than was ever before possible ; temples are rendered brighter by electric light ; alarm-clocks regulate more exactly the hours of temple service. Many leading members of the new commercial or intellectual life have been the most meticulous in maintaining their orthodoxy. Nor have the darker sides of religious observance been altogether forgotten. A prodigious number of goats are slaughtered before Kali, a sacrifice which is not despised by the best-educated ; devotees in the states torture themselves by the peculiar custom of hook-swinging ; and even cases of sati are sometimes reported.

Many of the social institutions have similarly undergone surprisingly little change. Caste, the chief peculiarity of Hindu society, continued in being throughout the British period and seems to-day to keep its vitality unabated. Though denounced by reformers, though admitted to be in conflict with the ideas of human equality taken over from the West, though defied by a succession of dramatic gestures performed by India's most respected leaders, it has endured and has continued to throw its blighting and dividing influence over Indian life.[1] Its requirements

[1] Under the British the caste system seems to have been weakened by the following causes : (*a*) The law courts have taken over a part of the functions of caste panchayats (*e.g.* in marriage matters). (*b*) The rights of non-Brahmans to act as priests have been held by law to be valid. (*c*) The law protects the property of a caste renegade who incurs caste penalties. (*d*) Marriage outside the caste has been legalised. (*e*) The exigencies of modern life — railway travel, work in offices and factories, etc. — have caused some caste taboos to be relaxed. On the other hand there have been new factors actually making for a strengthening of the system. The political awakening has for example given a political colour to caste questions : castes have organised themselves politically for the defence or securing of privilege : and this has increased caste feeling. In many cases government allots a quota of government appointments to Brahmans, non-Brahmans, and depressed

and taboos are observed even by the classes which in other respects have become most westernised, and if these are at least conscious that the virtues of the system have been questioned, in the villages it continues to be accepted almost as a fact of nature. In the same way the unpleasant institution of untouchability has persisted with little amelioration, for though the pariahs were placed by the British on a footing of legal equality with caste Hindus it was custom and not law which determined their status. Similarly the position of women, a chief index of a nation's progress, has changed less than might have been expected ; a feminist movement has, it is true, in the past ten years come into increasing notice ; but the ideas of feminine emancipation while appealing to the Indian intelligence are repugnant to the emotions ; and indeed Indian women themselves show far less desire for freedom, equality, and an independent career than did for example the women of China after the coming to that country of Western ideas.[1]

Thus to all outward view the Indian way of life continues to be to a surprising extent what it was in Bernier's day and indeed at a much earlier period. It is a tapestry strange, obviously very old, still apparently intact. There is no danger that this antique character of India will be inadequately appreciated, for it is the thing which most strikes the visitor to the country. Rather the danger is that the observer will assume that because it is old it is everlasting, and will be so much interested by the tapestry as to fail to notice what lies behind it.

Social institutions, customs, manners, all the pageant of human life, are but the outward show of what is passing in the human mind. It is there we must look in order to

classes. Similarly in economic and social organisation caste has begun to play a new part. There are caste co-operative societies, caste tenements, even caste hospitals.

[1] Indian women still enjoy a very restricted social life. It is significant that though the feminist movement is still not very strong there is growing discontent. But this takes the form rather of self-pity, and regret by women that they were not born as men, than a determination to assert women's rights

see what is to come to-morrow and the day after. And in the Indian mind the signs are not those of conservatism and stagnation but of rapid and perhaps shattering change.

The traditional society of India produced among its members a certain outlook, and could endure only as long as these believed in certain ideas and behaved in certain conventional ways. They were other-worldly. They were little concerned with politics, believing that the social order was something prior and superior to the state, and that the business of government was to uphold, not to change, this order. They thought that the 'natural' unit to which a man belonged was the family or the caste; and those of different castes were almost in different lands. For Hindus the world was no more than a world of shadows, to take too much thought for which was wickedness. As the world was now so it had ever been (at least since the golden age which lay at an almost incredible remoteness in the past) and so it would always be (at least until the return of the golden age in a future no less distant). Contrast with this the ideas held to-day by the classes which have received a Western type of education. They believe in individual rights and liberties. They repudiate caste. In their minds, society is broken down from a federation of castes into an unorganised mass of individuals. They accept as an axiom that all these individuals are equal before the law. They have a quite new conception of government, believing that the social order is something which can and should be changed and moulded by governmental action. Their imagination has been seized by the idea of the progressive improvement of human life, and in consequence their attention has moved away almost with violence from theology and metaphysics and is focussed on economics and politics. In short among these classes there has been set down a veritable witches' cauldron of all the concepts and ideals which have been the great creative forces of European civilisation; and on Indian soil they are likely to prove no less potent than in the West.

It is true that many of these new ideas have been

adopted by the Indian intelligentsia no more than formally, are not believed in seriously, and do not yet fully influence their behaviour. It is true also that even those Indians who have exposed themselves to Western influence try often at the same time to conserve their inherited culture — an effort often involving excruciating mental agony, causing them sometimes to lead their lives in two distinct parts, a Western one and an Indian one, so that they exhibit the symptoms of a dual personality. Yet the inflow of the novel ideas continues ceaselessly. Their influence is likely to be both creative and destructive (like that of the Hindu god Siva). Like trees penetrating between the paving stones of an ancient building they will topple down much which was venerated and which will be afterwards regretted. But also they are by their nature so powerful that they cannot fail to build as fast as they overthrow.

Thus, no less than the economic and the class structure, is the structure of the Indian mind being slowly changed, and this is likely to be the greatest and most enduring revolution of all.

To resist the invasion of the new way of life India looks to its own past and tries to draw strength from its archaic civilisation : this, as we shall see, is the basic motive of Mr. Gandhi. But these defences are undermined as fast as they are erected. The invasion is persistent and remorseless. Though so much of the outward setting of ancient India remains, it is like a tree sturdy without but hollow inside. The castes, temples, and philosophies survive, but their strength is ebbing little by little. There is even a *Götterdämmerung*.

"And to-morrow . . . what of to-morrow ?"

"This only" [says Krishna]. "A new word creeping from mouth to mouth among the Common Folk — a little lazy word among the Common Folk, saying (and none know who set the word afoot) that they weary of ye, Heavenly Ones."

The Gods laughed together softly. "And then?" they said.

"And to cover that weariness they will bring to thee, Shiv,

and to thee, Ganesh, at first greater offerings and a louder noise of worship. But the word has gone abroad, and, after, they will pay fewer dues to your Brahmans. Next they will forget your altars, but so slowly that no man can say how his forgetfulness began. . . . My people do not think of the Heavenly Ones altogether. They think of the fire-carriage and the other things that the bridge-builders have done, and when your priests thrust forward hands asking alms, they give unwillingly a little. That is the beginning, among one or two, or five or ten — for I, moving among my people, know what is in their hearts."

"And the end? What shall the end be?" said Ganesh.

"The end shall be as it was in the beginning, O slothful son of Shiv! The flame shall die upon the altars and the prayer upon the tongue till ye become little Gods again — Gods of the jungle. . . . That is the end, Ganesh, for thee. . . . As men count time the end is far off; but as we who know reckon it is to-day." [1]

In the end a new pattern will be woven. But it will be by much labour and pain, and like Penelope's scarf will be frequently undone before it is finally complete. And in the meanwhile the country will be obsessed with a malaise, with bewilderment, with a sense that the times are out of joint. That is the main fact, not only in India but in all Oriental countries, behind the political ferment of the East.[2]

[1] Kipling, "The Bridge Builders".

[2] Most visitors to India sooner or later find themselves at Benares. This is one of the most extraordinary cities of the world. And here the question of the future of Indian civilisation is likely to present itself the most vividly. The student sees round him a multitude of temples, a most distinctive style of architecture, an ancient form of worship, and he is made by countless tokens almost oppressively conscious of the peculiar institutions which characterise Hinduism — caste, the veneration of the cow and the monkey, the funeral customs, sadhuism, the way of life of the pandit. But there exists in this same city a huge modern university housing one of the chief engineering schools of India, and as another outward sign of progress an impressive railway bridge spans the holy Ganges. Can these two worlds continue to exist side by side? In a hundred years' time what will be left of Hindu civilisation? Will it have lost its individualism and be merged in the general 'Great Society' of the twenty-first century? These are the reflections of the modern pilgrim to India's holy places as he wonders whether he is among the last of those many millions who during so many centuries have trodden these ways.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BIRTH OF POLITICAL INDIA

I

THE deep peace which settled on India in the nineteenth century, the social transformation, the rise of the middle class, university education, improved communications, a political press — these made a climate in which there burgeoned a political life quite unlike that of India's past.

Political activity began in earnest in the eighties. Looking back it seems surprising that it was delayed so long : perhaps the reason was the tradition from all the previous empires that private citizens had nothing to do with politics. But once the agitation had got under way it made up in its vehemence for the lateness of its start. The government by creating the legislatures had opened a kind of political theatre. It rapidly became popular : if at first the audience was found chiefly in the stalls, after a few performances the pit and gallery were no less full ; and the stage-door was congested by would-be actors. It must be admitted that the interior of the theatre had an atmosphere Elizabethan rather than modern. The audience spent much of its time in a roar ; it wished to jump the prologue and to plunge into the midst of the drama. Soon it showed an unmistakable taste for plays more melodramatic than the management was disposed to put on, and its favourite actors were those who could tear passion to tatters. It hissed, cat-called, and shouted 'Fire'. Every now and then the safety-curtain had to be lowered ; the chuckers-out were not idle : and sometimes the theatre was closed for weeks at a time. Trouble, too, developed on the stage. 'Temperament' led to casualties among the players : and there was diverting gossip of who said what to whom in the dressing-rooms.

2

These exciting events had a relatively quiet beginning. The first flicker of what was to become the political blaze appeared in the activities of the professional class. This class, brought into being by the new economic conditions, was composed of barristers, prosperous merchants, university professors, journalists, medical doctors, land-owners. These, educated in the European way, in touch with European circles, travelled and in possession of considerable wealth and economic power, were naturally attracted by European political ideas and sought to play in India the same part as the bourgeoisie in the Europe of that time.

It was this class which in 1885 brought into being the Indian National Congress. The subsequent stormy history of this party, and its evolution into one of those giant organisations which, like the National Socialists, the Communist party, the Chinese Kuomintang, and the Italian Fascists, rule the fate and disturb the tranquillity of so large a part of the modern world, must not lead us to forget that its beginning was modest and its professed ambitions were limited. Its early history has often been told : how two British civil servants played a leading part in its first meetings ; how it was patronised by the government ; how its activities gradually widened and led to the rift between itself and the administration. Even when it had become definitely an opposition body it continued to show much restraint. It met annually. It passed resolutions. It did little more.

What was the content of the mind of this new political India ? What were the aims of the political classes ? We can perhaps best answer this question if we try to think ourselves into the mind of a typical politician of the time. An imaginary figure may be chosen, one of those who in Macaulay's phrase were proud to think of themselves as Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in moods, and in intellect. Let him be a barrister by profession. He has been brought up on Burke, Shelley,

Ruskin, and Mill, traces of whom are to be seen in his admirable prose style. Let him be a Hindu and politically one of the most advanced members of his caste — for it must be remembered that at this time the general opinion was still strongly conservative. Probably he would have expressed himself somewhat as follows :

Two things are dear to my heart : nationalism and home rule. I observe all over the world the growth of national states, and I regard it as a law of nature that a political unit so clearly defined as India should be inhabited by a single nation. In the past we have admittedly been not one people but a congeries of peoples ; we have been not a country but a continent. But already I see around me the welding of the diverse Indian nations into a single nation. For myself, I no longer feel myself to be a Hindu, or a Moslem, or a Brahman, or a Vaisya, but I feel myself to be an Indian. So, I am convinced, do my associates in our party. The diverse languages of India are no longer a barrier separating us, for do we not now all speak English ? Admittedly it is only the people of quality who have yet seen the light : the benighted masses still cling to the old prejudices, observe the old taboos, and speak the multitudinous vernaculars which have so banefully kept them divided into separate groups. Yet I have faith. This force of nationalism has in Europe proved itself so gigantic, has accomplished such miracles, has stirred to life such torpid and sluggish societies, that I am confident it will prevail too in India, permeating all our people, not only high caste Hindu but also the untouchable, not only the descendants of the statesmen of Akbar but also the poor Moslem weaver and ryat. The political unity established by the British Raj, the economic unity which has resulted, the shrinkage of distance due to railway communications — all these are already promoting a sense of kinship we never knew before. Time is on our side. We need but wait.

Next, as I stand for nationalism, so do I stand for home rule. This is its natural corollary. Can I be reproached if I burn with desire to see India a free country ? It is not in nature that a patriotic man should submit to alien government. My stand is the same as that of Mazzini in Italy, of Kossuth in Hungary, of Parnell in Ireland. But understand me well. I do not desire to sever entirely the British connection. I give

place to none in recognising the work done by Great Britain in India, nor do I seriously challenge its claim to be the apostle of liberalism — though I am often puzzled and irritated by its apparent indifference in India to what it preaches so sedulously at home. Given a certain adjustment in our relations I am content, indeed I am proud, to see India a part of the British Empire, for I have almost adopted English history as that of my own country, and I have a sincere respect and liking for those Englishmen who admit me to their friendship. England must of course cease to put racial slights upon me when I travel abroad ; it must allow me to feel that I belong to a free and sovereign state ; it must gradually transfer from its own people to mine all the well-paid appointments in the administration which it now monopolises. If it does this, why should we quarrel ? As for our allegations that England bleeds us white by economic exploitation, do not take these too seriously. They are the stock in trade of day-to-day politics. We intend no bad feeling.

Under home rule the form of government in India will of course be the full parliamentary system. Looking round the world I perceive that the general current of political life in all civilised countries is towards the system. Who can deny that within half a century (say by 1941) the German and Russian parliaments will have the same power as Westminster ? Political progress and parliamentary government are one and the same. So, while we recognise that we must proceed gradually, our goal is the establishment in India of a duplicate of the British political system. Indeed, I understand that on this matter there is no disagreement between us and the British Government. Our only difference is as to the pace of advance.

Above all, let us have confidence. I see few clouds in the sky. Progress is inevitable. Tranquillity can never be upset. The eighteenth century is a bad dream which I have already almost forgotten. Then forward. Widen the franchise, broaden the power of the Assemblies, trust the people, repeal all the coercive acts, let the masses carry arms. All will surely be well.

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Such would be a not unfair account of the spirit of the last decade or two of the nineteenth century. This springtime of Indian nationalism was perhaps its fairest period. The public mind if ardent was yet generous ; if naïve it

was also appealing ; if unpractical it was responsive to reason. It was a tragedy that the government allowed so early a breach to come between itself and this Indian patriotism which did no more than repeat the commonplaces of English political platforms and desired no more than to be accepted by the British as partners in the administration of their country. That the failure was partly due to want of imagination and tact cannot be denied. Yet it is only fair to recognise the difficulties facing the administration. The men who voiced the new political demands had been brought up more or less as Englishmen and knew less of the country than many British officials. Their interest in politics had been drawn from books, and they had little understanding of the true nature of political forces or the methods needed to control them. The fact that political institutions required to be nicely adapted to the structure of society, and that what was practicable for urban, industrial, and literate England might not thrive equally in an India which was still socially in the middle ages, escaped their notice.[1] Roughly speaking they stood for an India similar to that established by the British — but with the British no longer in control ; and the possibility that the two might not be compatible did not enter their minds.

3

Such was the position at the beginning of the twentieth century. As the century advanced the principal change which occurred was that the interest in politics which had been confined to the professions was by them communicated to the masses. As at dusk the lamps of a great city light up one after another until the whole town is illuminated, so did class follow class in a political awakening. The composition of political parties changed from a membership of a few hundreds of educated persons to organisations numbering hundreds of thousands or even

[1] Unfriendly critics of recent events would suggest that this error has now communicated itself to the British themselves.

millions ; and political conflict, formerly limited to polite discussion, was apt to issue in riots and in demonstrations which shook the stability of the country.

These conditions gave rise to a new type in Indian society, the professional politician and agitator. Politics came to be elevated from the hobby of men engaged primarily in other walks of life into a whole-time profession which offered a life of agreeable excitement and comparative freedom. To the middle classes which had already expanded beyond the limits which the economic structure could easily support, the opening up of new careers with prospects always comfortable and sometimes even glittering came as a salvation. They seized the opportunity with zest ; and as the political ferment had made of agitation a profitable business, so did agitation increase still further the political ferment. Requiring for their very existence that the political pot should be kept on the boil, the politicians effectively saw that no section of the population slumbered over its grievances, and men were persuaded into a bitterness which if they had been left to themselves they would never have felt.

That a political ferment should have occurred was inevitable. All the conditions, national and international, fostered it. But though the outburst was thus predictable, the special incidents which attended it, its character, the effects which it achieved, have all, as is the usual way in human history, been determined by the idiosyncrasies and the personalities of a comparatively few men. Let us examine the history of the nationalist movement and the influence upon it of some of the more eminent personalities who have left their mark on the public life.

4

At the beginning of the century Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India, in some ways perhaps the most remarkable of that long line of often distinguished and sometimes genial men. His character, so often discussed and

described by students of politics, has come to be regarded as one of the curiosities of the age. A man of miraculous industry, wide curiosity, with a passion for setting afoot improvements in every department of life, whether or not his intervention was welcome or appropriate, he could not help, especially in a position so autocratic as that of the Viceroy, affecting profoundly the future of the country, either for good or ill. Few men have had a higher sense of public duty or have sacrificed themselves more wholeheartedly for the public welfare. In India he did not hesitate to range against him nearly the entire European population when there came to his notice a case of scandalous behaviour affecting the British army, and when it seemed to him that justice to India called for stern measures of punishment. With all his strength and integrity of character, and with his natural gifts of administration — marred only by an occasional surprising lack of a sense of proportion — his viceroyalty might well have been the proudest period of British history in India. And so in some respects it was. Let full justice be done to him. There are few beneficent activities of government to-day, few notable features of the administration, which cannot trace their origin or their improvement to his hand. It is surprising how often the visitor to India finds that, when of some institution or practice he exclaims " This is good ", he is told that it dates from the time of Lord Curzon. His is the great dominant figure of the summer (or late summer) of the British Raj.

Yet there is another side of the picture ; and in retrospect it appears that his was almost too strong a spirit for the political structure, and that his huge energy may have imperilled rather than reformed the state.

> A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
> And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.

Perhaps it is not altogether fanciful to compare him with Aurungzeb, the last of the major figures of the

Moghul dynasty. The strength of the Moghul Empire lay in the policy initiated by the great emperor Akbar (a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth) of toleration and indulgence towards the way of life of the Hindu population. Under Akbar the interference of government with the traditions of Hinduism was at a minimum. Hindu savants were invited to and honoured at the Moghul court : a placid conservatism prevailed. By permitting his Hindu subjects to go their own way, and by according them a sense of security, Akbar gave to the Moghul throne a stability rare in Indian history. Thus for a century the Moghul power was suffered to remain unchallenged. Its weakening came only when the dynastic policy was changed by Akbar's great-grandson, the emperor Aurungzeb, a man of energy and tenacity but of narrow political views. Reverting to the earlier temper of Moslem imperialism, Aurungzeb launched a campaign at once to extend the borders of his empire and to coerce his Hindu subjects into the acceptance of the Islamic faith. Their sense of security was gone. Disturbed, angry, they turned against the throne : and the result of the renewed Moslem pressure was to provoke a Hindu reaction which ended by overturning the régime.

Compare with this the history of Curzon's viceroyalty. He did not make the vulgar error of interfering with Hindu custom. In comparison with Aurungzeb he was a liberal of liberals. Yet his régime did mark a breach with the British imperial tradition. His coming to India shook up the system of government and the social order in such a way as had not happened for many decades. He sought to reform the conduct of the administration, the Indian princes, the army ; he had wide schemes for the reorganisation of schools and universities ; he partitioned the greatest of the provinces. Most of his schemes were sound, some brilliant, in conception — but they ran counter to the genius of British government. What had made that as tolerable as it was to Indians was its attitude of *laissez-faire*, its indolence, its willingness to let the country work

out its own salvation. Curzon's régime led them to change their ideas of the conservatism of the government, and made them feel that they were in danger of having the country transformed by governmental action — and by a government which was an alien one. The fillip thus given to nationalism was enormous. Ironical as it may seem, it would scarcely be too much to say that the Curzonian period was the greatest stimulant to Congress until the fatal shooting at Amritsar.

Lord Curzon ended by resigning the viceroyalty after a dispute with the home government as to the reorganisation of the military administration — a dispute in which he has been proved by subsequent events to have been in the right. His departure took place in 1905, and the years from that date until the rise of Mr. Gandhi at the end of the Great War form the next clearly marked stage in the history of Indian nationalism. This was its romantic period, and was marked by dramatic gestures, by sensational assassinations, and by Bengal terrorism. In Bengal the movement became associated with the worship of Kali, the goddess of destruction and the least amiable of the Hindu deities. Two leaders divided the allegiance of the nationalist parties. One was Tilak, a Brahman of a caste which had formerly held a kind of monopoly of the higher offices in the short-lived Maratha Empire, during which time it was said of it that it had converted its sacred thread into a bow-string, and which ever since had nursed a spirit of proud independence and of resentment against the British who had expelled it from its privileged position. The other, Gokhale, belonged to the same caste and was a man of singular grace of character and an orator whom Curzon had publicly declared to be a foeman worthy of his steel. To the present age the personalities of these men have begun to grow somewhat shadowy, but there is no doubt that they both exercised a very strong sway and that the growth of the nationalist movement cannot be understood except in terms of their personal influence. Broadly speaking, Tilak stood for the more extreme

policies, Gokhale for a moderate nationalism of a kind which permitted co-operation with Great Britain.

During this period a number of events occurred which considerably increased the general political excitement. The reforms of 1909 stimulated rather than diminished the political pressure. The outbreak of the Great War of 1914, causing a slump in the prestige of the European peoples; the peace settlement, with its impetus to the democratic and nationalist movements throughout the world; the economic progress in India, which strengthened and enlarged the middle class, the political class *par excellence* — all these made of the political life a steady crescendo.

Yet there was in this decade and a half from 1905 to 1919 a curious sense of uncertainty of direction. Indian nationalism was a gathering force but what channels it would take was not yet declared, and several different lines were open to it. The aim which was still the most generally accepted was that India should become a self-governing parliamentary democracy. But also new voices were to be heard. These laid the emphasis not on the new forms of government which India was to create but on the immediate struggle against 'imperialism'. To get the British off the backs of the Indian people was declared to be the all-absorbing task of nationalism: the question of what kind of polity was to succeed the British Raj must be left to look after itself: whether Indian government was to be democratic or of the traditional type was all one provided that India was free.

As time went on the agitation of these extremer nationalists took on strange shapes. Though they were for the most part themselves the products of Western education they affected a horror of Western culture and sought to revive what they conceived to be the traditional way of life. Thus in social matters they were the champions not of progress but of conservatism, defending such institutions as child marriage and untouchability. (The alliance of nationalism and social obscurantism was not

peculiar to India and was commented on at about the same time by Lord Cromer in Egypt.) In their zeal they invented a new picture of the Indian past. For example, Mr. C. R. Das, an eloquent leader in Bengal, wrote :

> We had corn in our granaries ; our tanks supplied us with fish ; and the eye was soothed and refreshed by the limpid blue of the sky and the green foliage of the trees. All day long the peasant toiled in the fields ; and at eve returning to his lamp-lit home he sang the song of his heart. . . . The granaries are empty of their wealth ; the kine are dry and give no milk ; and the fields once so green are dry and parched with thirst. What remains is the dream of former happiness and the languor and misery of insistent pain.[1]

For this sad decline, for all the evils of the time, and for their own psychological malaise, they placed the blame on the British. It was the British political system, the British commercial and industrial framework, and British education, which had ruined India and which alone stood, like the Flaming Sword in *Paradise Lost*, between Indians and the Eden from which they had been ejected.

Would this extremism prevail over the earlier moderation? Would nationalism prove a constructive force or would it waste itself in barren conflict with Great Britain and in a striving back towards a mythical past?

Nor was this the only questions which called for an answer. There was also the problem of the relation between the nationalist movement and the sectional communities into which India was divided. While the earlier political leaders had been mostly Hindu there were signs of a political stirring among the Moslem community. This could not but be an event of the utmost importance since the Moslems numbered about a quarter of the population and since they still cherished the memory of being the ruling people. Why the Moslems in the decade or two beforehand had been less in the picture than was subsequently to be the case, and what were the springs of action of the community which came to assert itself, these

[1] Quoted by Lord Zetland in *The Heart of Aryavarta*.

questions, of paramount interest for understanding modern India, can be answered only by a brief review of their history in the years immediately previous.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Moslems had played second fiddle to the Hindus. It was they who had been displaced by the British from the mastery of the country. They were suspected by the administration for their part in the Mutiny. They were in consequence inclined to sulk and to go into a kind of retreat. They clung to their Persian culture while the Hindus took advantage of British education.[1] Their disposition was less suited than that of the Hindus to the commercial and clerical type of civilisation which British institutions tended to foster. Thus they got the worst in the competition between the communities, and while they continued to preponderate in many of the subordinate organs of government service they had the mortification of seeing the higher positions pass increasingly to the Hindus. They were thus in every sense backward compared with the Hindus. But their political awakening though delayed was inevitable. When it occurred the grand question would be whether their political life would be merged and assimilated in the general national movement, or whether they would organise a separate and communal movement opposed to Great Britain and to the Hindus alike.

At this period many of the Moslem leaders were not disinclined to ally themselves with Congress. In the brave new political world they felt themselves to be Indians first, Moslems afterwards. They repeated Congress demands. Some even joined the party. On the other hand among the rank and file there was growing communal feeling, and riots broke out disturbingly often in some of the larger cities. Thus was the issue poised between a united India and communal dissension, and

[1] The Hindus regarded a course of British culture in rather the same light as we should regard a course at a Pitman's training college. It was an avenue to well-paid official employment.

which side of the scales would be found to prevail was the riddle which politicians then sought to read.

Such were a few of the unanswered questions in India at the time — the time of the Great War. Nationalism was still a malleable thing. It might have taken any one of many different paths. Here, once again, it seems to have been the accident of human personality, the appearance of a man of genius, which decided that history should proceed in one direction and not in another. The fateful personage who thus gave the decisive tilt and orientation to Indian politics was Mahatma Gandhi, with whom one period ended and a quite fresh period began. Due to this strange figure the programme of the political theatre was abruptly changed (as in the French theatre after *Hernani*) ; the players adopted a different style, favoured different sentiments, and even used a different make-up ; and there was a growing demand that the playhouse should itself be demolished and built afresh on different lines.

CHAPTER SIX

MAHATMA

I

In recent years owing to the preoccupation of the world with more formidable if less agreeable personalities Mr. Gandhi has ceased to enjoy the international celebrity which was once his. Yet for a large section of mankind he has been the dominant figure of the age, and for many of the curious features of contemporary India he bears a personal responsibility which might well disturb a man whose convictions were more liable to doubt. Thus, even if he is no longer to play a considerable part his career deserves to be studied in some detail ; nor since even his strongest critics would take no harsher view of him than that he was, in one of Burke's phrases, " instead of blameable, mysterious ", can one fail to be fascinated by the problem of trying to find some explanation for the apparent contradictions of his character and teaching.

India has always been liable to be impressed by religious leaders. Religion hovers in its atmosphere, as is apparent to the visitor even to-day when a secular movement is alleged to be in full swing.[1] At Indian courts religious leaders have in the past enjoyed great political influence, and the imagination of the masses has often been more stirred by them than by the illustrious temporal personalities of whom India has had no lack.

[1] Children are not uncommonly named after the major deities. Thus an atmosphere is created similar to that in England at the time of the Commonwealth when biblical texts were fashionable as Christian names. Or a more exact parallel would be if English children to-day were christened Jehovah, Jesus, Virgin Mary, Trinity, or Holy Ghost. It is not surprising to find at the same time a surprising amount of blasphemy and levity with regard to the deities, for there was an almost precisely similar contrast in the European middle ages.

Thus what Mr. Gandhi has achieved comes less as a surprise than it would have done in any other country, and he is sometimes described as the latest of the long line of Indian saints who have dabbled with success in worldly matters. Yet it is easy to exaggerate the extent to which he is no more than a type familiar to the Indian tradition. In many respects his record and his ideas have been unquestionably original. For example, in the systematic use of his religious hold over the masses for political purposes, in the grasp of method of extending his religious sway, in his flair for publicity, and in the use for political and religious purposes of the technique of commercial salesmanship, he has scarcely a predecessor. He is a kind of Oriental General Booth, and a personality quite like his has not appeared before in Indian history.

The record of his life is well known, and his autobiography is justly celebrated both as revealing a complex personality and as illuminating Indian affairs. The son of a chief minister at a petty court in Kathiawar, he went as a young man to England to study law, and there in addition to his more serious undertakings he learned, according to his own account, dancing, elocution, and to play the violin and bridge. In his own expression he "aped the English gentleman". Later he practised as a lawyer for some years in South Africa, not without success, and came into public notice during the Boer War by organising an Indian stretcher-bearer corps. After the war he showed his political gifts and experimented with his future political technique by organising his community and by standing up to General Smuts in the interests of the Indian shopkeeper and merchant. In 1915 he returned to India and began to preach the need of spiritualising politics. He caused a sensation when, on undertaking a study tour preparatory to entering Indian politics, he travelled third-class, a genuine act of mortification which only those who have undergone this experience on Indian railways can properly appreciate. Subsequently he sought membership of the Servants of India Society, a well-

known organisation which in avowed imitation of the Jesuits aims at consecrating to the service of the nation those who have utilised to the full the resources of secular education. But in seeking to join the Society he stated that if he were admitted he would attempt to render more ascetic its already rigid discipline and in particular would demand that it should accept the rule of absolute poverty. This the Society declined to do, and Mr. Gandhi set up business on his own. Ever since he has lived in the manner prescribed for sages in ancient Hindu tradition : that is, in an *ashram* or colony of disciples whom he instructed in his ideas, whose characters he sought to make plastic in his hands, and whom he despatched to the world to execute his political projects. Indian tradition requires the lifelong submission of the pupil to the teacher, the subjection of the pupils' will and reason to the direction of the master. Mr. Gandhi has not hesitated to enforce this discipline, and thus has had at his command a staff whose devotion and obedience a European dictator might well envy.

In the years immediately following the Great War Mr. Gandhi and his followers managed to secure control of the Congress party, the nationalist party whose early history was studied in the last chapter. They have permeated it with their ideas and changed its structure and its aims. Their hold upon it has been now greater, now less, but has never been seriously shaken. The biography of Mr. Gandhi and the recent history of Congress are identical.

The events of the period since Mr. Gandhi assumed leadership can be briefly stated. Mr. Gandhi made self-government the keynote of his policy, and declared himself totally dissatisfied with the Government of India Act of 1919 which set up dyarchy in the provinces. As a protest he organised a mass movement of non-payment of taxes and systematic disobedience of law ; but this he suspended when it passed over into a wave of purposeless violence and atrocity. Under his influence Congress at first boycotted

the new constitutional structure of 1919 and refused to stand for election to the provincial assemblies. Later it entered the Assemblies, but with the object of impeding public business. When in 1927 the official discussion of the reforms was resumed and the Simon Commission was despatched to India, Mr. Gandhi started another great agitation. For this purpose he sought to make of Congress a mass movement, enlisting under its orders the largest mass following possible. In 1930 he started a second nation-wide movement of civil disobedience, suspended it in 1931, but revived it a few years later. So grave was the disturbance that the government was for a time seriously embarrassed and its power was compromised ; but in the end the movement exhausted itself. During these events Mr. Gandhi was for some time imprisoned.

What is more important than these bare events is the new ideas and the new methods which Mr. Gandhi brought into Indian politics and which have changed the current of the national life.

He is a thinker so subtle, and has been engaged in so many enterprises requiring a nice spirit of compromise, that it is hard to formulate his creed with precision or to state it in such a way as to be safe from the charge of misrepresentation. In the course of his long career he has been in so many predicaments, has been so omnivorous in his curiosity and bold in experiment, that his actions have sometimes appeared inconsistent and his statements conflicting. If this has on occasion proved embarrassing to his followers it is still more so to those who set out to expound his views since against so many of the texts on which they rely others may be quoted which contradict or modify them. Thus the interpreter lays himself open to a charge of bad faith, and if he persists in the enterprise of trying to make a coherent philosophy out of a mass of newspaper articles, replies to journalists, *obiter dicta*, table

talk, implications and the impressions of third parties, it is because Mr. Gandhi's mind is so fascinating and his position so commanding as to make the task worth while.

If we start from the old-fashioned idea that every man has a ruling passion from which all the rest follow, Mr. Gandhi's may be said to be a passion for simplicity in the material side of life and in all that concerns human institutions. He finds distasteful the kind of civilisation which has grown up in India since the contact with the West, and feels that for the ordinary poor man life in the towns and work in the factory is a bad life, stunting the good and bringing out much that is bad in human nature. Thus far he manifests in India a line of thought which occurred in England when our own society was at a somewhat similar stage of economic evolution as that which India has reached to-day, and like some of the writers of that time, especially Ruskin and William Morris, he carries his aversion from industrial civilisation so far that, even if human ingenuity could perfect the social organisation, and towns and factories could be freed from their attendant evils, he would still be its inveterate enemy. For an industrial society purged of its squalor would require a social organisation more elaborate than even that of to-day, and Mr. Gandhi's instinct is against everything elaborate. The elaborate is the precarious; and he is convinced that if a pitch of perfection can be reached it cannot be maintained. He points to society in the West — now plunged in misery by economic slump, now drifting by a kind of uncontrollable slide into war — and with some justice declines to regard it as a model which India would wisely imitate.

His remedy is the return to the simple life. If the great revolutionaries are those who, having the imagination to conceive society organised on quite different principles, have also the audacity to believe that such radical reconstruction is possible, Mr. Gandhi is plainly to be placed in the same class as Plato, Rousseau, and Marx. In the face of the trend all over the world to urbanisation

and industrialisation he thinks it nevertheless a practicable policy to aim in India at shifting back the population from the towns to the villages. Like the rulers of Erewhon he aims at blotting out the Industrial Revolution. It seems that in the India of his ideal the great bulk of the population would be engaged in agriculture, such towns as continued to exist being small in size and devoted to commerce and culture, not to industry. He does not shirk admitting the tremendous consequences of the elimination from the national income of the production of the factories, but he argues that a part of the industrial commodities which the peasant now consumes could be made in the village ; what could not be thus manufactured the peasants could do without. Though slightly poorer they would in his view be much happier, and indeed there are few who would question his premise that a nation has made an ill choice if in seeking to satisfy its material wants it plunges itself into misery.

From these ideas develops Mr. Gandhi's cult of spinning, a notorious, characteristic, and puzzling part of his philosophy. Both Europeans and Indians are apt to be bewildered and irritated by his claims — made often at moments of intense excitement when his followers look to him for practical advice on how to handle an involved and difficult situation — that the great ideals in which India is interested — freedom, world peace, social regeneration, material progress — are to be achieved by spinning and by the weaving of homespun cloth. Mr. Gandhi himself spins for a certain time each day, and if he had his way all citizens regardless of station would follow this practice. It is sometimes suggested that the cult is a purely political move, designed either to ruin Lancashire or in some obscure way to impress the peasantry and knit together country and town in a common political union. But it is connected quite logically with Mr. Gandhi's central ideas. Having grown up at a time when Indian industry was little more than textile industry, he regards the town population as a congregation of spinners working under peculiarly un-

pleasant conditions. If the farmer can satisfy his needs for thread by returning to his ancient custom of spinning his own cotton he cuts the ground from under the feet of urban civilisation, and eventually disperses these unhealthy concentrations. Moreover, Mr. Gandhi is impressed by the immense fortunes piled up by the Indian textile magnates ; and though he does not hesitate to levy upon them for his political undertakings he argues that these fortunes have come from the pockets of the peasantry, and constitute a drain from the village which should by all means be reduced or altogether stopped. Mr. Gandhi is not disturbed by the reply that when allowance has been made for the farmer's labour the homespun thread is more expensive than the factory product and that the farmer is therefore well advised to purchase factory goods. For he argues that the farmer who expends his labour upon cotton spinning (even though it may be an excessive amount of labour compared with what would be necessary in the factory) is probably using time which would otherwise be wasted in non-productive pursuits ; and as a result of his labour he is spared the necessity of paying a toll of his rice or wheat to the industrialist. Thus by spinning the farmers can increase their income and make themselves independent of the towns. If they spin, the towns and factories and all their evils will dwindle away. By spinning there can be created the ideal society ; spinning is the grand engine for solving all social problems ; by spinning can be spun the doom of urban civilisation.

Such are Mr. Gandhi's economic ideas. Similar ideas have been held by other philosophers in India. It is because of Mr. Gandhi's political eminence that they have in his hands enjoyed so much importance. It is his political activity which has made him so portentous a figure.

3

His political thought seems to spring from the same source as his social philosophy, that is, from his dislike of

the elaborate. He is anxious to eliminate the complexities of political organisation. There are clearly limits to the length to which he would carry his convictions, and he has from time to time modified his political ideas, but his instinct seems to be to dissolve as far as possible the state organisation and to free society from its burden of a political superstructure. His Utopia is a federation of village societies each of which would manage its own affairs by means of panchayats, maintain order, administer justice, and provide for its severely simple needs. Such a plan is of course by no means novel. A kind of despair at what man has created in the way of political institutions, a kind of petulant delight in destruction, has appeared at intervals in European political thinking no less than in Indian religious philosophy. It is present even in the Marxian philosophy which forecasts that in the ideal future the state will " wither away ". The interest in Mr. Gandhi's case is that these rather anarchist proposals come from one who, unlike others who have held similar views, has demonstrated a flair for all forms of political management, and who, for all his ascetic nature, must be assumed to derive delight from the game of politics.

These political ideas of Mr. Gandhi's, though in his exposition of them stamped unmistakably with his personality, are closely related to, and perhaps spring from, the traditional Hindu concept of the ideal state. Indeed in one or two of the smaller principalities of the present time the framework of the Gandhian Utopia is almost a reality. The maharajah confines his activities to temple festivals, to a light supervision of the villages, and to fulfilling the role of paternal president. For monarchs of this type Mr. Gandhi has a soft place in his heart, and for all his hard words against the princes he is more a royalist than a republican. But the hand of the monarch is to be guided by the counsel of the seer ; and on the correct relation between the royal and the priestly or admonitory power Mr. Gandhi would probably have discovered a coincidence of views with the prophet Samuel.

These ideas form a kind of archaic strand in Mr. Gandhi's thought, and they are curiously interwoven with a much more modern strand, that is, the fervid nationalism which he has derived from Mazzini, Garibaldi, and the great European patriots. Like them he thinks of his country as an ideal person, his ideas being at times almost naïvely anthropomorphic, and it is from this romantic spirit that there proceeds his determination to separate India from Great Britain or at least to give it such a status as to enable it to develop its own national personality. But his nationalism subserves his social policy, for he believes that nationalism is the only means by which he can realise his own ideals of social reform. So long as India's affairs are managed by Great Britain so long will they be run on Western lines, and so long will the experiment of the construction of a Gandhian civilisation be deferred.

These seem to be Mr. Gandhi's political ideas. But to Western peoples what has been more interesting than his ideas is the means by which he seeks to ensure them. His methods of non-violence have wakened much public curiosity in Great Britain and America. Their origin is still rather obscure. Some are inclined to find their spring in the old Hindu custom known as 'sitting dharma' — already practised two thousand years ago — by which one who was aggrieved sat on the doorstep of his wronger and commenced a fast, thus mobilising against the oppressor all the moral sentiment of his neighbours. Others find his inspiration in Christianity and in the ideas of Tolstoy. Mr. Gandhi has stated his principles over and over again. If a person or group of persons desires to redress an injustice the proper method is to eschew violent action but to offer resistance in such a way as to shame or melt the heart of the wrongdoer. Thus the citizens of an invaded country would not take to arms, which would only sharpen the fury and determination of the aggressor, but would peacefully lie down as a kind of sacrifice under the feet of the invading armies ; similarly the oppressed sub-

jects of a bad government would disobey the bad laws but would conduct themselves so meekly that the judges would be ashamed to convict them and the government to enforce the sentence. Mr. Gandhi claims that this method is equally efficacious whether used in Asia or Europe and whether against oppressors hampered by scruples or timidity or against the most ruthless wrong-doers, though in some cases the success may take longer to achieve than in others and may involve more suffering.

It should perhaps be noticed that Mr. Gandhi's ideas of non-violence and his preaching of the primitive village life form a consistent whole. A community organised on the lines which he advocates would clearly be unable to muster effective military resources for defence whether against an invader or against any sort of army, however small, in the hands of the government.

The ideas of non-violence are certainly not novel, but Mr. Gandhi's originality and audacity has been to put them into actual practice and by their means to challenge the British rule which thirty years ago seemed so impregnable. It is said that he was impressed by a remark in the book of Professor Seeley which has already been quoted that the British Empire in India rested on consent, since the small number of Englishmen in India could never govern so vast a country without the consent and the co-operation of a great section of the people. Mr Gandhi concluded that if this co-operation could be withheld the British Government would become an impossibility. It cannot be denied that up to the present his methods have at times been remarkably effective. Yet as Mr. Gandhi knows better than anyone else the method of non-violence and civil disobedience is one which is very difficult to use, which requires the nicest judgment, and the most disciplined self-restraint, and which, if directed by men of less integrity than Mr. Gandhi, may have disastrous consequences. The indispensable condition for success is that the cause of the disobedient should be clearly just, otherwise the conscience of the antagonist will not be

touched and he will harden his heart. At one time Mr. Gandhi was advantageously placed because the British mind was not easy about the British position in India. But Great Britain put all its energies into the Act of 1935 in an effort to do justice to India, and broadly speaking has in its own mind placed itself in the right. Thus one phase has ended and another phase has begun.

4

These appear to be Mr. Gandhi's main ideas. Whence they were derived, whether they will endure, with what historical characters Mr. Gandhi is to be likened, are the great questions for discussion in India to-day. Mr. Gandhi's followers love to compare him with St. Francis, and certainly his is a personality which might conceivably have existed in the European middle ages, exciting in the masses the same reverend regard and enjoying in consequence the same temporal authority. But perhaps a closer comparison would be with St. Bernard, the more political saint ; and as in the case of St. Bernard the methods by which he pursued his saintly ways often bore the traces of his baronial ancestry, so it is sometimes suggested that Mr. Gandhi's origin is visible side by side with his undoubtedly honest and disinterested ideals.

Sometimes he is declared to be a reactionary who under the guise of leading a great national movement in the modern style seeks to restore the ancient Hindu way of life. It is a mark of his complex and baffling character that while he is thus denounced he is no less strenuously condemned by devout Hindus as a heretic. Some even do not scruple to say that in a different age they would have ensured that he met an appropriate fate. They allege that he is a Jain or a Christian masquerading as a Hindu, deny outright that his ideas are of Hindu provenance, and complain that the ideals which he preaches are alien and imported. Poverty, meekness, the virtue of suffering, the need for renunciation have, it is true, been

preached before in India but the national genius has never accepted them as the kernel of its faith. These critics assert that Hinduism as it has been developed by its most reputable philosophers is a robust and indeed somewhat epicurean religion exalting the more colourful aspects of life ; and if it provides for and recommends asceticism to the elderly, this is at the end of a full life during which they are presumed to have savoured the various delights which the world affords. Hinduism, they claim, is the religion and outlook of the natural man and sympathises with his natural instincts and inclinations ; India's history is proof that it is equally the religion of the soldier and the statesman as of the ascetic and the *sannyasin*. The complaint of these critics against the Mahatma is that of Julian against Christ : the world, they say, has grown grey with his breath. The light in which they see the Mahatma can perhaps best be explained by means of an analogy. To them it seems as incongruous to include Mr. Gandhi, who has made no contribution to metaphysics and who moreover in exploiting his religious prestige for secular ends has in their eyes broken the most binding rule of respectable behaviour, placing himself on an almost menial level, among the great philosophers of Hinduism as it would to a Christian theologian to place Dr. Buchman side by side with the fathers of the church and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Any man who has loomed so large in his age as Mr. Gandhi is bound to be the object of extravagant denigration and almost idolatrous praise. Perplexity has been increased by the seeming contradictions of his character. For example, few of his most ardent admirers have been able to overlook a sternness amounting almost to vindictive ruthlessness in his relations with some of his compatriots with whom he has fallen foul. Nor is it easy to understand why one who so often excites among some Englishmen a sincere moral repugnance is at the same time able to exercise over others an almost uncanny fascination.

5

What has been Mr. Gandhi's actual achievement in politics ?

It is hard for an English student to attempt an answer. Mr. Gandhi has many times been a thorn in the side of the British Government. His policy has often seemed to be the chief cause for the drifting apart of the British and Indian peoples. Thus the Englishman fears that his judgment may be prejudiced. Moreover, Mr. Gandhi's ideas admittedly belong to the Oriental world, and it seems proper that they should be judged by Oriental rather than by Western standards.

Perhaps the best way of assessing his contribution is to compare the condition of India as it was at the beginning of his career with the India he leaves at its close. No greater compliment can be paid to a man than to suggest that the fortunes of his country are the mirror of his own personal character. And of course Mr. Gandhi has really been responsible for only a part of what has happened in India. Not even he can bid the world forces be still. Yet Mr. Gandhi's personal influence on affairs can hardly be overstated.

When he came to the forefront there were, as we saw, a number of open questions. It was open to the nationalist movement to become either a force co-operating with the other nationalist movements in the British Empire, or to clash in sterile conflict with Great Britain. It was open to it to take as its ideal the adoption of the best which Western civilisation has to offer, or to hunt after the will-o'-the-wisp of India's past glories. It was an open question whether it would absorb the Moslem political movement in itself or whether the Moslems would develop a separate and communal consciousness. Most of these questions are now closed. And they have been settled in a way which few people can regard as satisfactory.

It would be merest folly to blame the Mahatma for the disappointments of to-day, just as it is folly in the

nationalist to put the blame on Great Britain. But there are many in India — not Europeans but Indians — who in analysing his record argue as follows :

> " The Mahatma, great and notable as have been his services to India, leaves a legacy which is of dubious value to the beneficiaries.
>
> " That his methods have brought India far along the road to national freedom we do not deny. But is it not possible that but for his intervention the constitutional progress would have been more rapid ? Great Britain had given clear token, by its conduct both in its Dominions and India itself, that it was sincere in its intention to transfer power to parliamentary government to the extent that this government showed itself equal to its responsibilities. Who shall say but that if we had concentrated our efforts on making a success of the Act of 1919, instead of organising opposition throughout India, we should not by this time have achieved full Dominion status ?
>
> " Let us count the cost of the Mahatma's methods.
>
> " He has introduced into Indian politics the adulation of the leader and the habit of blind obedience which is the essence of fascism.
>
> " By blending religion and politics and by the peculiar revivalist atmosphere which he has created he has put out of action many of the secular virtues whose employment is so essential for the public safety. Thus he has opened the way for cranks and fanatics who have sometimes crowded out from public life men of more balanced and fuller experience. He has set reason at a discount, and has equated criticism, which is the life-blood of democracy, with blasphemy, and satire, which is its great cleansing medicine, with sacrilege.
>
> " As the test for fitness for public life he has put the willingness to suffer imprisonment in the place of intellectual ability ; and has exalted the amateur and

dilettante at the expense of the expert and the efficient.

" By reviving and painting in rosy colours the older ideas of Hinduism he has encouraged India to look behind instead of forward ; and the renewed cult of the antique, which is a marked feature of the times and which if it prospers may threaten the people of India with the fate of Lot's wife, is to no small extent the result of his influence.

" He has set the country false goals, both for its economic and its political aims. The economic ideals which he preaches are opposed to all the compelling forces of the age and have set India on a false course which at best can end in misdirected labour, disappointment, and vexation.

" The political goal is still more dangerous. For he condemns the Western institutions by means of which India has built up its modern elaborate social structure. He proposes to pull this down and substitute a régime of panchayats. But panchayats and the modern world do not go together. A polity such as Mr. Gandhi desires can only support a community of a much lower standard of complexity than that of India to-day. To dissolve the organisation of the modern state is to make an end of commerce, industry, the press, the railways, and the telegraphs. It is to extirpate the middle class. It is to cause bloodshed, famine, and suffering on a vast scale while India reverts to a simpler and more primitive life, and halves its population.[1]

" Moreover, while he thus holds up this primitive type of political life as the ideal he has given very little guidance as to the concrete details of the institutions he desires to create. Indeed in practice he has been content to work with the machinery of a party which

[1] These critics do not deny that the contemporary institutions of government are very imperfect and cause much suffering and injustice. Mr. Gandhi's remedy (like that of Tolstoy and Victor Hugo) is to destroy them : the remedy of his critics is to improve them. To destroy them, they say, would be to increase a hundredfold the suffering and injustice.

resembles in many respects the dictatorial parties which are the special product of twentieth-century politics.

"Gravest of all, he has, by his repeated agitations, caused a premature and dangerous spread of political activity among the masses. His strategy in politics has been to prevail by sheer numbers: thus he has been the greatest mass agitator in Indian history. The consequences are already becoming apparent. His campaigns of civil disobedience have brought the law into contempt and have fostered the habits of revolt. It is hard to see how any man with a normal sense of responsibility could have risked these consequences, least of all in India the curse of whose history has been lawlessness and violence; and there are signs that he now realises what he has done and repents of it. It will be irony indeed if history has to record of this gentle fanatic that, like an Indian Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he more than any other undermined the foundation of society, and has upon his head the blood perhaps of hundreds of thousands."

Such would be the main counts in the indictment. It would be indignantly rejected by the Mahatma's followers, and they could state a good case on the other side. They might well prove that the charges are overstated and that there is much to be said in extenuation. But it is doubtful if they could secure a complete acquittal.

Nor indeed is the indictment yet complete. For there are some who would lay at Mr. Gandhi's door, though perhaps with less justice, the responsibility for the worsening of the relations between Hindus and Moslems which of all the events of his lifetime may prove to have been the most momentous. At the beginning of Mr. Gandhi's career it was still doubtful whether Indian politics were to be organised in terms of the religious cleavage, or whether Hindus and Moslems were to be joined together by the common bond of nationalism. To-day at the end of the

period of Mr. Gandhi's ascendancy the division between the communities has become complete and irrevocable. Though some Moslems still march under the Congress banner, the bulk of the community has settled down in opposition to it. The Moslems no longer fraternise as fellow citizens with Hindus but declare themselves a minority of the kind with which post-war Europe has become all too familiar. They have organised a nationalist movement of their own — a Moslem nationalist movement opposed to Hindu nationalism.

For this deplorable schism Mr. Gandhi is sometimes held responsible. It is said that he gave a Hindu slant to the outlook and aims of Congress, and that this caused the Moslem exodus.[1]

What truth there is in this allegation is one of the questions to-day most hotly debated by Indians, and it is rash for an Englishman to join in the dispute. It is only fair to point out that Mr. Gandhi himself has always placed Hindu-Moslem unity in the forefront of his programme. Some of his most ardent disciples have been Moslems (though these have sometimes ended by hating as earnestly as they loved) and he has nominated Moslems as President of Congress. For a time he succeeded in effecting a cordial co-operation with Moslem leaders,

[1] The Moslem argument that the Mahatma is preaching orthodox Hinduism takes the following lines: Mr. Gandhi's caution in condemning the caste structure root and branch masks a belief that caste is divinely ordained. His zeal for removing the worst disabilities of the untouchables is a bid to win back the untouchables to Hinduism and end the danger of their conversion to Christianity or Islam. His proposal that the vocational training of the village school should be developed at the expense of more academic teaching is an attempt to restore the old system by which the masses of the people were condemned by hereditary lot to a mechanical life, and the arts and sciences were a monopoly of the Brahmans. He aims at substituting a Sanskritised form of the vernacular for the Persianised form at present in use in the Moslem areas of North India, and this is part of a sinister plan of establishing a Hindu Raj. His life in the *ashram* and his position as a *guru* mark him as a Hindu and not a national leader. He countenances as an Indian national anthem a song which is blatantly anti-Moslem. His cherished ideas — the cult of simplicity, spinning, poverty, and non-violence — are essentially Hindu, and with them Islam will have no truck or compromise.

especially when in the years following the war he agreed in return for Moslem aid in his home-rule campaign to patronise the Moslem agitation against the British treatment of the Caliph. But latterly his efforts seem to have failed. Certainly his professions to be the friend of the Moslems are no longer received by Islam with applause. And *prima facie* it would indeed seem difficult for Islam to reconcile itself to an India governed as he would govern it, unless Islam is willing to change its nature and to shed the characteristics which have marked it in the past. Both the ideas of the Mahatma and the revivalist atmosphere which he has engendered seem repellent to the bulk of the Moslems. Indeed the tragedy of the Mahatma's career is that while his main object in life is the unity of India, his actions have so often tended to cause disunity; and in this he rather resembles Mr. De Valera, whose passionate desire is a united Ireland but who has in fact so greatly widened the gulf between Eire and Ulster.

Whatever may be the truth in this matter Mr. Gandhi has now become a symbol. Innocent as he may be, he symbolises for the Moslems the threat of Hindu dictatorship; and whether or not he has caused the communal clash he is regarded by most Hindus as their champion and by nearly all Moslems as their most formidable adversary.

Such are some of the controversies which have raged round this remarkable figure. His friends will, I trust, forgive me for pointing out thus frankly what are the arguments used by his detractors. Possibly I have dwelt too much on them. Only posterity will be able to judge his career. But on one thing all will be agreed. Whether his influence has been for good or ill, of its extent or decisiveness there is no question. In the scene of everyday life as much as in great events his hand is to be found. It is through the Mahatma that men wear again the native dress and homespun cloth. In houses and offices his photograph is as ubiquitous as that of Dr. Sun Yat-sen in China or Stalin in Russia. Thousands have gone to

prison because he told them to do so, and tens of thousands have modelled their behaviour on ideas unfamiliar to them and have adopted ways instinctively repugnant. The intellectual life has been permeated, or as some would say emasculated, by his authority. Under his influence many have abandoned careers of great promise and devoted themselves to social service whose reward has been indigence and obscurity. If the needs of the peasant are studied as never before by the politician, and if the townsman has been made aware that urban interests cannot be made paramount, it is at least partly due to his example and unceasing propaganda.

Perhaps his achievement which in the long run will be found to have had the most lasting results is the revival of self-confidence in the average Indian. It is very dangerous to generalise about the psychology of a people, especially in a country with such diverse types as India. Yet it may be said that until recently the impression left on the traveller in India was a lack of self-assurance and a deep inferiority towards the Westerner which was an embarrassment to normal social life. If that has now changed, if the Indian feels himself on terms of equality, if the younger Indian has passed to the other extreme and, though ignorant of the essence of either, professes to regard Indian culture as something more spiritual and humane than Western, the transformation is due to Mr. Gandhi more than to any other man.

6

In the lifetime of so unusual a man it is difficult for the observer to avoid seeing the life of the country exclusively in relation to his undertakings and teaching. The light issuing from Wardha has been so dazzling that other though lesser beams generated both inside and outside India have been comparatively little noticed. The Mahatma has drawn attention to much which hitherto went unnoticed ; but his figure is so dominating that it is apt to screen much which is at present taking place and

may be decisive in the future. Though for many Indians his views are all-sufficing and though as the result of his teaching many who had discontentedly groped among Western philosophies felt that they had found a rock of ages, yet with his advent Indian history and the movement of thought has not come to an end. Forces have been gathering and ideas germinating with which Gandhism will find it hard to come to terms. The Mahatma has lately been made aware that his hold on India, though still immense, is less sure than he might well have supposed, and if there are some who have the audacity to question his ideas in his lifetime the challenge to them after his death may be sufficient to put an abrupt stop to the Gandhian age.

The revolt of the Moslems has already been discussed. Moslem youth looks not to the Mahatma but seeks for prophets of its own.[1] In addition there is the influence, no less adverse to Gandhism, of Karl Marx and Lenin. The extent to which Indian youth has been intoxicated by Russian ideas is still perhaps not adequately appreciated in the West. But it can hardly be surprising that, in contrast to the Mahatma's austere injunction to spin and tell the truth, the Muscovite ideas have a baleful and exciting attraction. And Mr. Gandhi as he surveys the future sees perhaps even more disturbing portents. With the widening political unrest political organisation has begun among the labouring and peasant classes, and these, though respecting the Mahatma as a holy man, are likely in political matters to incline to more drastic methods than he will permit. Through his propaganda organisations he seeks to tame, teach, and indoctrinate them; but at least in some parts of the country the battle has begun to go against him.

These newer trends have led to conflict which must be examined in detail in a later chapter.

[1] As yet it has scarcely found any very inspiring ones. But they may arise.

7

Finally let us see what has happened during the period of Mr. Gandhi's ascendancy to the Indian liberals who proclaimed the parliamentary ideal. The gifted, eloquent, cultivated generation which first took up the fight with Great Britain has long since passed away. But there are others alive who have inherited their traditions and outlook. For them the world has darkened. Rejected by the electorate, they find themselves sentenced to private life. The political and social aims for which they stand have been repudiated, and their bewilderment and anxiety can be easily imagined. The ideas which are now current, the ideals which are guiding, seem to them irrational, incendiary, and reactionary. No longer is it a question of a reorganisation of the political system but of an entire social revolution ; and politics, instead of a decorous debate between members of the professional classes, has become a conflict between vast organised camps of partisans moved by the crudest emotions and appeals. Meanwhile the world has become no longer safe or stable, and they perceive that they grossly underrated the tasks facing an Indian government : nor do they any longer doubt what would occur with the elimination of the British army.

The members of this class note with special horror the condition of the younger generation. If formerly it was their habit in public speaking to urge the youth of the country to rouse itself to action, they never intended that it should be in the present manner. They observe that students have ceased to read anything except the newspapers, to discuss anything but strikes and elections. In conversation they find them ignorant, arrogant, incurious, boorish, and disrespectful ; and they begin to lose their faith in the Western education of which these young men are the deplorable product.

Even more provoked are these liberals by the growing Moslem danger. The cause of communal bitterness puzzles

them, for though in their youth the proletariat had sometimes rioted, such vulgar hostility was quite unknown among the educated classes. But they remember enough of Indian history to know that the Moslem is a hard guest to accommodate ; and if they are Hindus they begin to feel a sneaking liking for the Hindu Mahasabha and perhaps even to subscribe to raising a Hindu militia.

For all these ills they are inclined to blame Congress and the British. Congress they censure for having called in the masses to politics, thus letting loose a world of woe ; and for its inability to let sleeping dogs lie. For the British are kept their most exasperated strictures. If only the British had conceded reforms in time, before Congress in its bid to mobilise a force against them had called in the people . . . And now if they would only show firmness which would take the wind from the sails of the socialists, daunt the Moslems and thus

> Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,

so that men of moderation and goodwill might

> Do faithful homage and receive free honours,
> All which we pine for now. . . .

CHAPTER SEVEN

STATES

In the foregoing chapters the attempt has been made to describe the political and social changes in British India and the course of the popular movements from their onset down to the years of Mr. Gandhi's ascendancy. But British India is only a part of the sub-continent. About one-third of the territory and about one-quarter of the population is governed by native princes. This is a very large fraction of the country, and clearly the history of its political institutions and economic and social systems calls for no less study than does that of British India.

In past years there has perhaps been a tendency to 'forget' the states. To do so is to obtain a partial and inaccurate view of recent India history, since it is to miss many clues to its understanding which are veiled in British India but clear to the eye in the states. For the states are less westernised than British India, and often claim that their institutions are in many ways a truer expression of the national genius than are those of British India. Especially at a time when British India is passing more and more under purely Indian sway there is much interest in scrutinising the fortunes of those parts of the country which have always been under Indian government.

The study needs, however, to be made with discrimination, since the states, which number nearly six hundred, vary very considerably in size and type. To understand the system which they form it is necessary to recall their origin. Though some have a long and illustrious history, as is the case with Travancore and many of the Rajput states, most were the creation of magnates who took the opportunity of the downfall of the Moghuls to carve out for themselves independent principalities. In the years before

the coming of the British the states were at constant war with one another and boundaries were continually changing ; but with the establishment of British supremacy it was as if a Gorgon's head had been turned in their direction ; the warfare ceased, boundaries became fixed, and the stage which in this struggle of all against all had chanced to be reached in the latter part of the eighteenth century became more or less permanent and rigid. This is the explanation of the rather strange articulation of Indian India.

Some of the larger states exceed in area many European countries. For example, Hyderabad and Kashmir are both nearly as large as Great Britain ; and Mysore and Jodhpur are about the same size as Scotland. The great majority of the states are, however, very small indeed, some having a population of less than one thousand ; these might indeed be more fittingly termed 'estates', as is made clear by the way in which they are often ranked in importance according to the size of their revenues. Not all the states form compact units. Often their territories are divided and, as it has been well said, are mixed with British India like currants in a pudding. This is notably the case with Baroda.

Whether great or small the states were allotted a peculiar status in the political theory which grew up in India in the nineteenth century. They did not form part of the Indian Empire, but neither were they sovereign powers. They were neither feudatories of the Government of India, nor protectorates, nor merely allies, and to explain their position there was invented the principle of paramountcy. This asserted, *tout court*, that the British Government was paramount in India, and as such had the right to intervene with the princes in any way it saw fit in the least matter or in the gravest. Normally the Crown guided its behaviour towards the princes by the letter of the treaties which it had negotiated with them when they originally came to terms ; yet by virtue of paramountcy the Crown stood towards them as it were in

a second and superior relation. Paramountcy gave it the right to intervene where and how it pleased — to compel a prince to carry out general reform, to enforce a particular command, to secure the redress of a particular grievance, to send away favourites, to curb extravagance, to effect a change of ministers, and even compel an abdication. Such a theory, if hard to state in detail, was convenient ; and if difficult to reconcile with the British system of the rule of law, did not in fact result in the arbitrary and irresponsible action which the Moghul Government, when it had the power, had been accustomed to take against its dependants. Perhaps the nearest historical parallel to this peculiar relationship was that between Rome and its client kings ; and many a British resident at a native court might have felt himself at home in the kingdoms of Herod and Ptolemy.

The real as opposed to the theoretical status of the princes has been apt to change according to the way in which the government of the time exercised its paramount rights. Thus in the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon the princes were made to feel themselves little more than the agents of the governor-general ; and still earlier the practice had for a time prevailed of regarding the government of the states as a kind of dyarchy of Maharajah and British Resident. But since the time of Lord Minto there has been a tendency to treat them as all but sovereign associates of the British Crown.

The princes, especially the more powerful among them, have left no room for doubt that they chafe at their subordinate status, and have sought, though always unsuccessfully, to challenge the principle of paramountcy. But it must not be thought that they gained no advantage from their relations with the British Crown. On the contrary, but for these relations most of the dynasties would by now have perished. It is Great Britain which maintained them in being. In return for their submission it assumed the obligation of protecting them. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this meant protection against rival

potentates. In the present century it has come to mean protection against the popular movements for their overthrow which may be organised in British India by the nationalist parties.

In their history during the nineteenth and present centuries the states in social and economic development have followed broadly similar lines, in political evolution divergent lines, from those of British India. Socially the states have certainly been more backward than British India, but the trends of progress though weaker have been in the same direction. At least in the larger states there grew up a professional middle class, and private commercial enterprise created something of a modern economic system. The political institutions of the states have taken often a very individual course. It is difficult to generalise about the systems of government which they to-day possess. An observer with very wide experience of princely territory has written :

> In one or other of the Indian States is to be found practically every stage of development through which British Government in India has passed except the very latest : from autocracy of varying degrees of benevolence to institutions almost if not quite as democratic as some which are in course of replacement by something still more advanced in British India.

Many examples of progressiveness could be given. Hyderabad has in recent years devised an original and very interesting method of budgeting, and the same state is now making the experiment of creating a legislature elected on the basis of occupation. In Travancore the parliamentary assembly, for all the vicissitudes of its political life, is full of health and vitality. In Cochin there has come into existence as the result of long evolution a kind of dyarchy of one official and one responsible minister. Baroda is experimenting with a new type of legislature. Of quite especial interest is the system in Mysore. This was the first Indian state to introduce popular assemblies of the Western type ; but the assembly

once planted has developed along lines of its own, and its atmosphere and procedure are to-day quite different from the legislatures of British India. To attend one of its sessions is to feel that it is an institution which fits the people like a glove, and the observer cannot help but contrast its vivacity and homeliness with the sense of constraint, artificiality, and almost of play-acting which are seldom absent from the assemblies of British India. The Mysore assembly is in fact less a parliament than a kind of giant panchayat. Elected by a fairly wide franchise, it meets two or three times a year to discuss the affairs of the state with the Maharajah's executive council. The proceedings are informal and resemble most nearly, though on a much magnified scale, the periodical meetings between the officials in British India when on tour and the local people who are free to come before them with petitions and complaints. The government is not rigidly bound by the resolution of the assembly, nor can the assembly compel the resignation of ministers. Yet convention and prudence require that the ministry should treat the mood of the assembly with great respect, taking care that the members return to their constituencies in good-humour. Thus is forged the link between government and governed — thus ministers come to respond to the popular will, without the ministry being made entirely dependent on the whim of the representatives of a people which, for all its many virtues, is still illiterate, uninformed, and politically inexperienced.[1]

All the examples given have been of the larger states, and naturally it is there that the most significant experiments are to be looked for. Yet some of the small principalities have also become a kind of laboratory of political experiment. For example in the minute state of Aundh the attempt is being made to re-create on Indian soil some of the institutions of ancient Attica!

Thus there is no lack of political vitality or innovation

[1] There is also in Mysore a Legislative Council, a smaller body elected on a more restricted franchise. This assembly has actual legislative powers.

in Indian India. At the same time it is never to be forgotten that in some ways the states, even the most progressive, have conserved more of the old tradition than has British India. Thus the observer who has already been quoted writes :

> The keynote of the government in the states is personal rule. Even where the Ruler governs through or with the aid of a Chief Minister, a Council and a Secretariat, with or without a Legislative Assembly, he remains the Head of the Executive and his wishes, on that side, amount almost to law. He appoints his Ministers and removes them at his pleasure, sometimes at a few hours' notice, and this ensures that the policy they carry out is his. This does not mean — though there is a danger that it may do so — that his people are oppressed or would exchange his rule for that of the British Indian province next door.

It is perhaps this emphasis on the personal element in the government of the states which has led to the appearance in some of a succession of remarkable personalities as the leading ministers. Possibly state service gives freer scope to imaginative and masterful man than does service in British India. At the present time it is not infrequently remarked that the flower of the Indian political intelligence is to be found in such men as Sir Akbar Hydari, Sir Mirza Ismail, Sir V. T. Krishnamachari, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, and Sardar K. M. Panikkar, all of whom find the service of the princes more congenial than that of the Government of India or of the popular parties. In more than a little they resemble the ministers of the states of the Holy Roman Empire.

It may be objected that this is the brighter side of the picture. There is another and grimmer one. It must be frankly admitted that there are parts of Indian India which seem to have been passed by by progress, and where conditions of life are not very different from those described in Chapter One of this book. Many of the medium-size and small states are a kind of museum pieces,

their political institutions being those of Moghul times. On the whole the smaller the state the less likely has it been to be well governed, for the minute principalities lacked the resources and the personnel to establish a modern administration, and seem at the same time to have been so small as to escape the eye of the Political Department, the agent of the Government of India responsible for their supervision. In more than one state it appears to have been a maxim of government to impose taxes not with the object of revenue but of breaking the spirit of the fractious populace ; and the incompetence, oppression, and profusion of certain princes have been a disgrace to themselves and to the Paramount Power. Though the British Government has from time to time intervened in the case of graver scandals, there are few to-day who would not complain that in general it has been too lax ; and its leniency was the more reprehensible since it has itself created conditions in which the vices of the petty tyrant enjoyed an artificial protection. In a more turbulent age a monster was liable to dethronement by his subjects or his neighbours ; but with the coming of the British, legal rights became more secure ; and palace revolutions, the great corrective in a lawless community, were put out of date. In consequence a greater responsibility for vigilance fell upon the Paramount Power.

Such was the picture of Indian India immediately prior to the discussion which led to the Act of 1935. One of the most significant features, and one which was to have the deepest influence on these discussion, remains still to be noticed. This was that the states were moving closer to British India. In the nineteenth century their life had been passed in relative seclusion from British India. But with the growing complexity of the social and economic system they began to feel the pull of their great neighbour. They were caught in the network of railways, telegraphs, and economic enterprise, and their affairs became increasingly intermixed with those of British India. And later a new and potentially even stronger connection was

forged since the political parties of British India expanded their activities to the states.

In some ways the India of the princes presented a close parallel to Germany as it was before 1866.[1] There was the same multitude of dynastic families. There was the same particularist sentiment. There were the same vested interests making for a continuation of the *status quo*. But at the same time there was the same growing pressure of economic forces, political convenience, and national feeling working increasingly for unity. And there was the same pull of a neighbour whose power was overwhelming and which represented the modern world and modern ideas of political organisation.

[1] Stevenson's *Prince Otto* is a vivid account of a German court of this time. It would apply very closely to an Indian state to-day. In India there are many Ottos, many Seraphinas, many Gondremarks. Even the revolutionaries are there in the shape of the State Congress Party.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ACT OF 1935

I

WE come now to present times — to the years in which the various trends examined in the previous chapters have fused and have created one of the most intractable political problems of which even the perplexed modern world has had experience. This problem which has so unhappily menaced the security of the country and the welfare of the British Commonwealth as a whole is the culmination of the history of a hundred and fifty years. It is compounded of the following elements :

Under the shelter of the British Raj the ancient society of India had undergone a radical change.

Partly as a result of these changes, partly because of influences from abroad, Indian opinion had become dissatisfied with the type of administration which had brought this new society into being. Furthermore Great Britain had for half a century been fashioning stage by stage in India a system of representative government and was pledged to the eventual setting up of full responsible government. At the same time it acknowledged its inescapable obligations to the princes and to the minorities.

The nationalist movement had increased in vigour ; and while one section saw eye to eye with Great Britain in its ideal of a parliamentary system others were bent on setting up political régimes of quite different types. Mr. Gandhi especially had led many to aim at the reconstruction of society according to what was believed to be the ancient Indian tradition.

The Moslem community had declared itself to be a minority requiring special protection.

Through their economic and social relationships the Indian states were moving closer towards British India.

None of these facts could be ignored. The essence of the problem was to devise a form of government which would at once satisfy India's aspirations, safeguard the existence of the new society and the liberal principles which characterised it, and be in harmony with British pledges and obligations. Round this central problem all other problems in India revolved, and on its solution depended the country's future security, order, wealth, and civilisation — matters in which Great Britain is scarcely less interested than India itself.

2

The deliberations which were to culminate in the Government of India Act of 1935, the attempt to solve the problem with which this book from now on is chiefly concerned, began with the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927. Throughout the discussions which were thus initiated the guiding aim was to ensure the earliest possible attainment by India of self-government. The day had gone by for questioning the propriety of the wish of the Indian political classes to take charge of their own political destiny. The individual Indian, conscious of his equality with the individual Englishman, found it galling that his country should not be 'free', and the great majority of Englishmen sympathised with this feeling. Moreover, since the development of representative institutions had already proceeded so far, it was an urgent matter that the interval before the transition to full responsible government should be as short as possible. Difficulties always arise when an irresponsible executive confronts a powerful elected assembly. The elected body naturally seeks to extend its powers; it uses the only method open to it and refuses to pass the measures required by the executive; this, in order to carry on the

administration, has to enact them by decree. Thus the political life becomes a farce and a general demoralisation is apt to set in.[1] Such a state of affairs had in fact developed in India in the twenties, and was described as follows by Mr. Aldous Huxley, who visited the country in this period :

> Old and new strangely coexist, and India is ruled in accordance with two completely incompatible theories of government: that of Akbar, shall we say, and that of Woodrow Wilson. On Monday the watchword of the executive is "Reform and responsible self-government" ; like Oliver Twist the Indians immediately ask for more : their demands become increasingly insistent, and the Government nervously decides to be firm. On Tuesday some General Dyer rivals the exploits of the Moghuls ; repressive legislation is passed, the gaols are crowded. On Wednesday the Government is seized with qualms. Remembering what Mr. Gladstone said in 1882 and why the Great War was fought, it makes a "generous gesture". The response is so unenthusiastic that it becomes necessary on Thursday to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act and imprison several thousand suspects without a trial. By the end of the week everybody, including the Government itself, is feeling rather muddled.[2]

It was a state of affairs which could not last, and the most attractive solution was the transfer of full powers to the Indian parliaments.

This would have meant the establishment of a system of government similar to that of the British dominions. But the political problems of India were so much more complex than those of the dominions that its political evolution could not be on exactly similar lines. For example, the experiment of entrusting full responsibilities

[1] In circumstances of this kind there are a number of different ways by which a *modus vivendi* can sometimes be found. In the U.S.A. the executive, though not responsible to Congress, is nevertheless subject to periodical election, and this prevents the long continuance of a deadlock. Another link between the executive and Congress seems to be the control of patronage by the executive. In Ireland in the eighteenth century the parliament was simply purchased by the government. But this finally brought the system into contempt and led to the Union in 1801. See Rosebery, *Pitt*.

[2] Aldous Huxley, *Jesting Pilate*.

to parliament in a country whose previous traditions had been of authoritarian rule could not but be hazardous — and at the time of the discussion it appeared all the more dubious because the prestige which the parliamentary ideal had enjoyed in the earlier years of the century had begun to wane, and disastrous crashes had occurred in more than one country which had adopted parliamentary institutions. Moreover, it was clear that although Indian society had undergone great changes it was still very unlike those societies which had made a success of parliamentary government.[1] Its special peculiarity was that, in spite of the existence of a vigorous national movement and of a small class of intelligentsia genuinely modern and nationalist in their outlook, India was not a nation in anything like the same sense as is common in Europe. As a result of past history and of the age-old tendency for society in India to fall apart into groups living isolated from one another, India is still a congeries of economic classes, religious communities, and peoples sundered from one another by differences in culture and language. Each of these, though professing its desire to co-operate with the others in the establishment of Indian self-government, is fearful lest under the new system its interests should be jeopardised, and demands protection and guarantees.

The kind of problem thus presented is by no means unique in modern political experience. Indeed the Indian question is much illuminated if the history of certain other countries is studied, and it may be that by this means certain misconceptions will be avoided. For example, the present situation in India is in some ways rather similar to that of Ireland or of certain countries in central Europe.

[1] An Indian historian once observed to the writer : " What is the state of our society outside the great cities ? Look at the life of the masses. Look at their poverty, their illiteracy, their superstition, their preoccupation with religion, their credulous acceptance of the most fantastic rumours. Look at all the outward show of life — the methods of agriculture, the temples, the processions. These are the conditions of the European middle ages, not of Europe to-day. A constitution which would have been out of place in mediæval Europe is out of place in India to-day."

In all these countries the national movement is as dynamic as in India, but there are also divisions of the deepest kind between interests and parties each of which follows its own ends and is unable or unwilling to co-operate with the others. Yet even in these countries the divisions are for the most part far less acute than in India, since in many the conflicting factions are brought into sympathy with one another by a common language which, together with religion, has been the great architect of united nations. But in India the diverse languages have been the chief of the factors making for division.

Among the Indian intelligentsia there have always been some who urged that the divisions of the Indian people should be ignored and that a paper constitution should be imposed by the fiat of the British Government. But this is to mistake the nature of the problem. If India is to enjoy a free system of government it must be one which is willingly accepted by the main groups in Indian society. For if the system is not thus acceptable it will infallibly break down or turn in the end into dictatorship. A free system cannot survive if within the state there are powerful groups which dislike it or fear it so much that they will stop at nothing to subvert it. That is the moral which is to be drawn from the failure of parliament in various European countries, especially in the Weimar republic and in Spain ; that is the danger which was sought to be avoided by the long deliberations of the Round Table conferences. The search was for a measure which would be accepted freely, even if reluctantly, by each of the main groups.

Of the divisions of the Indian people the most important is the communal one ; this has created the minority problem which has come to dominate Indian politics. The majority in India are the Hindus ; the principal (but not the only) minority is the Moslem community. The difficulty of bringing these two elements of the nation together in equal acceptance of a democratic constitution had appeared as long ago as at the reforms of 1909, and at

that time the attempt was made to reassure the Moslems by allowing them separate electorates and a fixed number of seats in the assemblies. Subsequently the device was much criticised : but to have abandoned it would have caused the minorities to take up a resolutely hostile attitude. Thus it was decided that it must form part of any new constitutional settlement. This was, however, not enough to tranquillise the genuine fears of the minorities. Long and tedious negotiations were necessary before a scheme was evolved and the difficulty was that attempts to meet the complaint of one group resulted in proposals which were unacceptable to the others. The wonder is perhaps that in the conditions of India so great a measure of agreement was achieved as was in fact the case.[1]

The communal problems would in any case have made the discussion of a new constitution very complicated. It was protracted by the difficulty of fitting into the constitutional jigsaw yet another of the 'sectional' groups. These were the princes. When the Simon Commission visited India it was assumed that its duty was to report on a system of government for British India alone. But shortly after it had submitted its report the task was rendered more complex, as it also became more momentous, by the proposal of the princes — made of their own free will — to join with British India in the formation of a single and modern state.[2] Thenceforward the purpose of

[1] The communal problem is discussed at much greater length in Chapter Ten.

[2] With the introduction of the dynastic question the India problem became very much like that of Germany in 1848. The motive of the princes in making their decision seems to have been complex. Some of the wiser dewans had undoubtedly read the signs of the times, and perceiving that a united India was sooner or later certain, had advised their masters to enter a federation while they might still obtain very favourable terms for accession. With others the motive was the desire to see an Indian federal government in the place of the Political Department to whose control they objected. When these discovered that under the federal plan paramountcy would still continue as the principle governing the relations of the Crown and the princes in matters that lay outside the federal sphere they lost a good deal of their original enthusiasm for the project ; and this has been one of the impediments to carrying through the federation.

constitutional reform was not only to forward the parliamentary system of self-government but also to effect one of these great federal unions — the creation of political unity which should yet safeguard the liberties of its members — which many regard as one of the chief political ideals of our generation.

The decision of the princes both complicated and facilitated the task of extending responsible government. It made it possible to widen the powers of the central assembly, since, as this would include the representatives of the states, it was assumed that it would be a body making more for stability than would have been the case had it been composed solely of the members of the popular parties of British India.[1] At the same time the proposal raised a host of new problems which otherwise would not have needed to be dealt with. This happened because the bargaining position of the princes was strong, and because, though it could be represented to them that their own true interests pointed to joining an All-Indian federation (as they themselves recognised at the outset of the discussions), and though the Paramount Power could exert discreet pressure, they could not be compelled to accept the terms which were proposed to them. In proposing originally their accession to the federation they had perhaps assumed that the union would be more formal than real, and they sought therefore to obtain terms which would leave their powers substantially unimpaired. Their attitude was in many respects much resented by the politicians of British India.

Indeed the federal scheme made the already complex India problem so much more involved that it is sometimes represented that it would have been wiser to reject the original overtures of the princes. But the objections to this course would have been many. In the previous decade economic and social forces had been working very

[1] The Simon report had taken the view that responsible government at the centre was not an immediate possibility in British India. It was the decision of the princes which transformed the situation.

powerfully towards the unification of the country: and it can hardly be challenged that it was proper to take the opportunity — which almost unexpectedly offered itself — of welding the country together on modern principles. Moreover, to have created a new and popular government in India from which the states were excluded would have been to raise a host of awkward problems. The popular government was unlikely to accommodate itself to the princes; friction would have been constant; and owing to this the treaty relations between the Crown and the princes would sooner or later have brought the British Government and the Indian into collision, a danger to be prevented at almost any cost.

These were the problems which arose out of the divisions of the Indian peoples. There was another set of problems of a quite different kind and scarcely less intractable. These were concerned with the defence of the country. The bald fact was that the security of India, internal as well as external, depended in part on British troops and in part on an Indian army chiefly officered by Europeans. This fact was certainly not palatable to Indian national pride but it could not be put on one side; the defence establishment of a country cannot with safety be radically transformed overnight, least of all at a time of such world-wide insecurity as the present. Thus arose the problem on the one hand of fitting the defence organisation into the framework of the new constitution, and on the other of planning its long-term reconstruction in a way which would bring it into harmony with nationalist ideas. And for reasons which are discussed at length in Part Two of this book, these problems were complex in the extreme.[1]

[1] India's external defence depends also to a great extent on the British navy, and if India proposed to secede from the British Empire the problem would arise as to how it was to create its maritime defences. But this problem did not arise during the discussion of the Act of 1935 since the continuance of India in the Commonwealth was taken for granted.

3

The examination of these problems occupied from first to last nearly ten years. During this time the India question was in the forefront of British politics, and was passed in review at a majestic and deliberate pace by a Royal Commission which twice visited India, by three Round Table conferences in London between the British Government and Indian leaders, by a series of British parliamentary committees which reviewed special problems (Franchise, Finance, etc.) in India, and by a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament whose report, though less well known than that of the Royal Commission, will rank with the celebrated reviews of the Indian situation by the parliamentary committees at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The upshot was the Act of 1935, and whatever criticisms may be made of this measure it cannot be denied that it represented the sincere work of very able men.

It is necessary to have exactly in mind what the Act contained. It was an exceedingly elaborate document owing to the multitude of provisions inserted to reassure the various interests, and though its gist is to be found in a comparatively few pages it is easy in examining the details to lose sight of the general plan.

Firstly, the Act determined the arrangements for the federal union between the provinces and the states. Thus it provided for a federal executive and a federal parliament consisting of a Council of State and a Legislative Assembly. Of these the Council of State so far as it consisted of members representing British India was to be directly elected, the Legislative Assembly indirectly through the provincial assemblies; the representatives of the states were to be appointed in a manner determined by the government of each state. When the federation was complete the Council of State was to consist of a maximum of 260 members (of whom 104 were to represent the states), the Legislative Assembly of 375 (of whom 125 were to

represent the states).[1] The seats were to be allocated to states or groups of states individually, and the actual number of states representatives would thus depend on the number of states which joined the Federation. The Act also specified in great detail the powers which belonged to the federal government and the powers which belonged to the units, and it guaranteed the units in power and in rights to revenue which — except when a state of emergency had been proclaimed — it was beyond the scope of the central government to limit.

These latter provisions meant a radical change in the system of government. Under the British Raj, at least during its heyday in the nineteenth century, this had been of the unitary kind, the provincial governments being no more than the agents of the central government. The provinces had had no powers other than those devolved, no rights which were not retractable, and this system, whatever its defects, proved beneficial in operating to weld the country into the unity which traditionally has been its greatest need. The system was now abandoned, and in the result the constitution tended to become something resembling what had been the ancient system of Indian imperial organisation — a rather loose association of political units which were subject to a central authority but enjoyed a wide measure of autonomy and which differed widely from each other in their domestic organisation. But it differed from the ancient system in that it sought for the first time to base the federation on law, to safeguard by law the rights of the units as over against the centre, and to provide a court to adjudicate disputes between them.[2]

[1] The large size of these chambers has been much criticised. Some of the most experienced of Indian politicians — especially the state dewans — were in favour of quite a small Federal Council. This, it was expected, would show a greater sense of responsibility.

[2] Even if the new constitution had been limited to British India its form would probably have been federal. The revival of local pride and local aspirations which went along with the political renaissance had made it almost impossible to continue the strict control by the centre. And when the British Government adopted in 1919 the policy of introducing responsible government first in the provinces before risking so great a change at the

The federal part of the Act has been much criticised by Indian nationalists. Though they have in general approved its aim of unifying the country, they allege that too high a price is offered to the states for their accession. The Act makes it possible for a state to accede on terms involving a lesser surrender of sovereignty than in the case of a province — this they declare to be inequitable. They question the wisdom of including in the same federation the provinces which are democratically governed and states whose government might still be absolutist. They consider that the states have been given too many seats in the federal parliament ;[1] and as democrats they object strongly to the provision by which these representatives of a state may be nominated by the prince and they demand that they should be elected by the people. They fear in short that the Act will give to the princes so much influence in the federal government that this will prove a reactionary rather than a progressive agency.

The second main feature of the Act was the provisions for the parliamentary system of self-government. In the provinces it established parliamentary self-government in almost perfect theoretical form. (It is true that the provincial governors have certain limited and defined powers both of acting otherwise than on the advice of their ministers and also of overriding the legislatures ; but in ordinary times these powers were more likely to remain in the background than to be put into actual use.) An Indian province is no unimportant entity. Under the Act of 1935 they number eleven. The most important are

centre, reform became inevitable since the popular governments in the provinces could not be expected to acquiesce in control by a central government which was still irresponsible. Thus even before the Act of 1935 the conversion of the Indian state into a federation was well under way. (The change can be traced back to 1915.)

[1] These critics overlook that a disproportionate weightage of representation in favour of particular groups is an almost inevitable price for every federation which is brought about by voluntary agreement. Thus in the constitution of the U.S.A. the state of Nevada with 91,000 inhabitants has as many senators as New York with a population of 14 millions. This is a much more striking departure from ' arithmetical democracy ' than is the moderate weightage given to the Indian states in 1935.

Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, and the Punjab, and of these Bengal, Madras, and the United Provinces are more populous than the British Isles. The powers of the provincial governments include the responsibility for law and order over vast territories, and for public services which in many provinces have become as elaborate as those of a European state. That such great areas should be popularly administered is no light thing.

The extent to which a parliamentary system is also a democratic one depends on the franchise arrangements. In India it was impossible to set up universal suffrage, the widespread illiteracy ruling this out of consideration. But the voting qualifications are anything but illiberal. Those enfranchised under the Act of 1935 number in all India about 36 millions.

The Act did not provide for a similar system of full parliamentary government at the centre, but instead it envisaged what was in effect a system of dyarchy not very unlike that which had existed in the provinces in the transitional years after the reforms of 1919. It is true that no doubt was left that if the Act proved successful the next stage of reform would be to extend the control of the central parliament over all branches of government. Nevertheless the limitations on the powers of the federal parliament and the popular ministers were keenly resented by the nationalists, and it was this which led them to damn the Act as if it had suspended instead of inaugurated a free system. The restrictions at the centre upon the full parliamentary system, and the reasons which led Westminster to impose these, must therefore be examined at some length.

The most important restriction is the existence of so-called reserved departments. Certain subjects — defence, external affairs, and the tribal areas [1] — were to be administered by counsellors responsible not to the central

[1] The list also included 'Ecclesiastical Affairs'. (This was the term used to describe the administrative arrangements whereby Christian ministrations are provided and Christian churches maintained at government expense for the benefit of the British army and of government servants.)

legislature but to the Governor-General personally. It is true that it was envisaged that there should be consultation and close contact between the counsellors and the ministers responsible to the legislature, — true also that the Governor-General would have been bound by his Instrument of Instructions to give the most sympathetic consideration to the popular view ; yet it cannot be denied that the reservation of these subjects, especially of defence, was a grave limitation of the powers of the ministers. But it is hard to see how it could have been avoided. For example, in the case of defence a great part of the responsibility fell upon British troops stationed in India, and these could not be put under Indian control. Moreover, it was held that even the Indian army, the ultimate sanction of law and order and the guardian of the country against foreign invasion, could with prudence be placed under the new government only after a waiting period in which the new institutions had had time to become set and acquire prestige.

Another difference between the constitution of India and that of the dominions is that the Governor-General was authorised and indeed required to act otherwise than on his ministers' advice, should it appear to him that the actions of government endangered law and order, or public credit, or the interests of the minorities, or the rights of the states or services, or threatened in their commercial policy to discriminate against Great Britain (if this was done with a view not to benefiting India but to damaging British interests) ; [1] and in the provincial

[1] In addition there are restrictions upon the legislative powers of the central legislature. It was declared incompetent to make laws affecting the succession to the Crown, the Army Act, the Air Force Act, the Naval Discipline Act, the law of British nationality, and the law of prize. Furthermore, for certain kinds of legislation there is required the prior consent of the Governor-General or the provincial governor ; and if an Indian legislature passes measures which are held to involve discrimination against British subjects domiciled in the United Kingdom it is provided that they automatically do not apply to such persons. Finally, the legislatures cannot amend the constitution. The nationalists who complain bitterly against this last provision seem to be unaware that the legislature in Canada, whose constitution they profess to admire, is under a like disability.

sphere a somewhat similar obligation was laid upon the provincial governors.

In various other ways the peculiarities of the Indian situation led to the inclusion of provisions which do not appear in the constitutions of the dominions. It is provided that if at any time the Governor-General is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Act, he may by proclamation declare that the functions of government shall be exercised by him in his discretion and assume to himself all or any powers exercisable by authorities constituted under the Act. A similar provision enables the governor of a province to supersede the provincial administrations (this being the provision under which the government in seven provinces has for the past year and a half been conducted by the governors personally.[1]) Again it is laid down in the constitution itself that the expenditure on defence, on the service of the debt, and for certain other purposes is charged on the federal revenue and is exempt from the vote of the legislature. Furthermore, the administration of railways and the control of currency is entrusted to statutory and semi-independent corporations. This was an arrangement designed to take outside the sphere of party politics the administration of these vital matters, and was to some extent copied from the system adopted in Great Britain for the control of such services as central banking, broadcasting, and electricity supply. It was objected to less vehemently than others of these special provisions. Though some Indian critics frankly deplored that it would cause much valuable patronage to pass out of the hands of ministers, others professed agreement with its principle and complained only that it was out of place in a constitutional instrument and should have been left to be enacted by the future Indian legislature of its own free will.

It will be noticed that in these various measures to

[1] Presumably this power would only be exercised on instructions from the Governor-General.

ensure the smooth working of government the ultimate responsibility falls on the Governor-General ; and the special peculiarity of the Indian constitutions is that as already mentioned the Governor-General, instead of as in the other dominions habitually acting on the advice of his ministers, is in India charged in certain circumstances to act upon his personal judgment, if necessary in opposition to his ministers. It would seem that the real purpose of these provisions was to secure that there was as it were a personal representative of the British tradition of fair play and compromise.[1] But it was supposed that these exceptional powers would be used only in exceptional circumstances. It was certainly not the intention of the framers of the Act that the Governor-General, except in matters of defence, should make a rigid and formal distinction between the sphere where he acted on his discretion and the sphere where he acted upon advice.

Such were the provisions on which resentment has chiefly centred. They were inserted in order that the British Government should be able to discharge in India

[1] There is an interesting discussion in the report of the Joint Select Committee. After describing the conditions needed for a parliamentary system to operate successfully the report points out that the present system of government in Great Britain was not achieved in a day, but that on the contrary the troubled years of the seventeenth century, with the bitter religious differences, the impassioned political conflict, and the lack of toleration, bear more than a superficial resemblance to the contemporary situation in India. In the England of that period the classes which engaged in politics were able neither to brook the absolute rule of the monarchy nor to co-operate with one another successfully in the management of an alternative system ; and internal peace was not restored until with the constitutional settlement of 1688 the rival parties came to recognise the usefulness of the authority of a monarchy able and willing in certain circumstances to act independently of either. From the calm engendered by that arrangement there gradually developed in an evolutionary way the system which functions with such surprising smoothness now, but which, had it been adopted prematurely, could not but have led to a repetition of the civil wars which marred the middle years of the seventeenth century ; and the report suggests, though in very cautious terms, that under the Act of 1935 the special responsibilities of the Governor-General and governors would place them in a position similar to that of the king in these more formative years of the British constitution, and that their influence would have the same happy mediating and balancing effect as in England, and in the same way would foster the growth of full parliamentary responsibility.

the various obligations by which it was bound. Collectively they came to be called 'safeguards', a vague and unfortunate term, the use of which was deplored by the Joint Select Committee and which has tended to obscure clarity of thought. Their usefulness has been widely questioned, and there are many who hold that to introduce them into the Act was to intrude a cold and blighting shadow over British-Indian relations with no substantial advantage gained in return. Yet those who sponsored them could argue that Great Britain could do no less if it was to meet its responsibilities. By its treaty undertakings it owed certain duties towards the princes; because of long relations of trust and of such specific pledges as are contained in Queen Victoria's proclamation it was compelled to safeguard the interests of the minorities; and as the result of its historical association with India as a whole, and out of consideration for the supreme importance of peace and order in Asia, it could not shuffle off responsibility for so guiding and supervising India's political evolution as to prevent a breakdown of law and order. Finally, British subjects possessed in India certain legitimate rights and interests, acquired by service in the country or by commercial enterprise which by and large had been as advantageous to India as to Great Britain, and parliament saw no reason why it should not ensure that they should be properly respected. And the caution of parliament was increased because Congress politicians had often in their public speeches announced their intention, once they had attained power, of abrogating various rights which Great Britain was pledged to protect, a habit which they have continued even since the Act came into operation.

The most damaging criticism of the special provisions was that they were likely to prove very weak impediments to Indian governments bent on overriding them. Once power was transferred at the centre to a government responsible to the Indian legislature, the British Government would have found that in the event of a breach of

the constitution it had no sanction to use, except coercion of India by force, a measure which British public opinion would have been extremely reluctant to permit. There were some who suggested that security could be obtained by making strict provision that the Governor-General and governors should continue to be intimately associated with all executive business, and to this end a section was inserted in the Act empowering the governor-general to specify the information which must be submitted to him. Some would have gone further and have provided that documents of a certain kind would, in order to be valid, need his signature. Yet even this requirement, if it had been adopted, would in the long run have been subject to the same objections as the special responsibilities ; and it seems doubtful whether human ingenuity could have devised provisions which, in the political circumstances prevailing, would have been proof against the attempt of a determined government to free itself from tutelage.

This being so, it is surprising that Indian nationalists did not give a warmer welcome to the Bill ; and the only explanation seems to be that they refused to realise the opportunities which it afforded. Admittedly it fell short of conferring on India a full dominion constitution ; yet many experienced judges held that if the major parties had shown a reasonable disposition to co-operate with Great Britain and with one another the transition to a stage completely satisfying India's aspirations would have been smooth, easy, and rapid. The role offered to the political parties placed them on a magnificent vantage-ground for developing their own powers in a way which would have resulted in the atrophy of the special powers of the Governor-General ; and their successful operation of the Act within these limitations would have given India a moral claim to their removal which would have been irresistible. One by one the remaining fetters would have rusted and fallen away. It is very doubtful whether the governors would ever have used their special powers except in cases where they were patently justified ; if

they had in fact done so an appeal by India to British public opinion would almost certainly have led to the disappearance of this cause of offence, either by convention or legislation. Over the long period the reserved subjects could scarcely have been administered by the Governor-General without the most intimate consultation and cordial understanding with the federal cabinet, and thus little by little defence would in fact if not in theory have come under the control of the legislature. Even that most difficult problem, the affairs of the states, might have been settled not altogether to the dissatisfaction of the nationalist parties, since the relations between the central government and the princes so far as they concerned federal subjects would immediately have passed within the purview of the legislature; and it is impossible to suppose that in the matters lying outside the federal sphere the Viceroy in his capacity as Crown representative could have been uninfluenced by events in British India. Thus by skilful but perfectly justifiable tactics and as the inevitable result of the operation of the governmental machine India would have found itself advancing to the same status as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; until at last parliament, recognising the revolution which had been silently accomplished, would have done for India what the Statute of Westminster did for the other dominions. Nor need the final stage have been so long deferred that India would have lost heart: had its politicians played their hand with skill they might within five or ten years have fulfilled their programme, and this by methods which would have led not to a breach but a *rapprochement* with Great Britain, and which would have caused the minimum additional stir to the already over-troubled waters of Indian society.

If the reluctance of Indian nationalists to accept the Bill was thus strange, the same can hardly be said of the opposition which came from the other side, from the group of conservatives at Westminster who so stubbornly contested its passage. Whatever view may be taken of the

way in which they conducted their campaign it can hardly be denied that they had a formidable case. They argued — and it is hard to find a reply — that with the transfer of power which was contemplated Great Britain would cross the rubicon so far as its relations with India were concerned. They questioned whether the sponsors of the Act had fully appreciated all the implications of the setting up of responsible government, and they suggested that if there were hopes that Great Britain and India might dwell comfortably for some years in a kind of half-way house between the old system of government and the elimination of British power, these hopes would certainly be disappointed. When the new system came into force the British Government would rapidly lose its grip on the means by which it might have arrested the course of an administration which was heading for disaster, and if the worst happened and anarchy resulted would find itself in no position to intervene unless it was prepared to contemplate the reconquest of the country. In their view the shield of the mighty which had for so long protected India and behind which so great a prosperity had flourished was about to be vilely cast away ; and if their forebodings and jeremiads were often tedious, yet even among those who most ardently supported the Act there were few who, in their secret hearts, did not sometimes feel themselves impressed by these arguments to the stage of disquiet and even alarm.

CHAPTER NINE

THE WORKING OF THE ACT

I

THE Act received the royal assent on August 2nd, 1935. It had been left to the discretion of the Government to decide on the time-table for the carrying out of its various provisions, and it seems never to have been contemplated that provincial self-government and federation would come into operation simultaneously. The purpose of including the provisions for both in one and the same Act was that India should be presented with the whole picture of its political future, without which nationalist opinion would have scorned provincial autonomy ; but it was always supposed that two or three years must elapse between the introduction of provincial self-government and the creation of the federal structure.

The establishment of the new system in the provinces was undertaken immediately. Elections for the new legislatures were held in the winter of 1936–7, and contrary to the expectation of many prophets these resulted in a majority for the Congress party in seven out of the eleven provinces. This party therefore found itself dominating the stage. It was in fact in a position to make or mar the working of the Act.

The start was not too promising. The paradox of Indian politics is that while the official slogans of the nationalist parties have been the demand for parliamentary institutions these parties have perhaps only a platonic admiration for the parliamentary system. Congress likes to present the picture as follows — a vigorous young nationalist party extorts a parliamentary system from a reluctant, grudging autocracy. Yet what are the facts? Surely these. Since 1919 Great Britain has erected the

structure of parliamentarianism. It has invited Congress to come in. But Congress has preferred to stay out. In 1921 it refused even to contest the elections to the provincial assemblies, and though later it entered the provincial parliaments it refused to join the cabinets. The official explanation by Congress leaders is that these were tactics designed to force the Government to concede at once full self-government, and this may in truth have been the motive of which they were chiefly conscious. But to many observers it has seemed that Congress, having spent all its early career in opposition, has acquired a fixed habit of mind which makes it very reluctant to discharge parliamentary responsibilities. The picture given by these observers is of a British autocracy producing the parliamentary apparatus and over a period of years begging, coaxing, wheedling, cajoling Congress — for the most part unsuccessfully — to deign to accept it. The comedy was repeated in 1937. First it was doubtful whether Congress would go to the polls: it was prevailed upon to do so. Next, nothing would induce it to accept office. At last it was baited in by an assurance from the Governor-General which caused in the minds of the minority communities grave doubts as to the value to them of the provision in the constitution enabling the provincial governors to protect their rights. Even when Congress, thus mollified, formed its cabinets it proclaimed that its intentions were not to work the constitution but to wreck it and thus force the British Government to concede a more liberal instrument.

Thereafter there occurred, however, a gradual improvement. Once Congress ministers were in office the attraction of power, the natural disinclination of those in positions of authority to vacate them, and the zest and interest they developed in their work caused a subtle change in their attitude, and many observers felt that Congress had come to mock but had stayed to bless. At the same time in the provinces where Congress had not secured a majority the new cabinets had been brought into

being without any difficulty. Thus for a while all the provinces of India became self-governing.

This phase lasted for two years and in that period it was possible for a visitor to India to see in eleven provinces the government being carried on by parliamentary assemblies, each more or less an imitation of Westminster, each following a procedure modelled upon that of the House of Commons, each with a familiar apparatus of Speaker, mace, and clerks, each using chiefly the English language and debating in phrases which seemed to him almost tiresomely homely.

During this period there were certainly grounds for sober satisfaction. The assemblies discharged their business without undue delay ;[1] they passed legislation which was progressive but which was by no means revolutionary ; the financial administration of the governments, though perhaps unwise in the over-hasty surrender of excise revenue, was in other respects cautious. Social services were extended ; useful enquiries set afoot ; new ideas popularised. Order was maintained, and if crime statistics showed in some provinces a rather noticeable increase this was due rather to a ferment in the country than to laxity in the governments. What was true of the Congress provinces held in general also of the others. The Punjab Government especially — compounded of a coalition of parties claiming to represent rural interests against the interests of the towns — had developed a programme, an energy, and a self-confidence which could not fail to impress.

[1] At the time of the Round Table Conference the fear had been expressed that Indians (whose experience of politics had been in the legislature rather than in the executive) would make the error of demanding that the assemblies should not only criticise and control the cabinets but that they should (as in France) extend their power so far as actually to share the responsibility of administration. But Congress cabinets (as also the cabinet in the Punjab) once in office showed that these apprehensions were not to be fulfilled, and they were inclined rather to limit the rights of the legislatures than to allow the legislatures to encroach upon the sphere of the executive.

Such was the credit side of the account. Public opinion, though ranking the achievement of ministries in some provinces considerably above that of others, was inclined to judge the prospects of the success of the parliamentary experiment as by no means unfavourable. Indeed visitors to India, European residents, and some British civil servants gained new confidence in the future. In the smooth co-operation of ministers with British governors and civil servants there seemed to be the sign of the *rapprochement* between Indians and British which would be the surest guarantee of the success of the constitutional experiment, and there took place in London a noticeable rise in the prestige of India and the good-will towards its aspirations.

That there was a debit side to the account could not, however, be denied. There was a curious sterility in the political life which contrasted strangely with the opportunity which India had been offered, and it was notable that during this period the older men dominated the scene and that in the debates in the assemblies very few fresh reputations were made. It was as if the country had exhausted itself by the convulsion of the early thirties and was passing through a barren period. In the provinces governed by Congress the opponents of that party did not lack material for criticism. Inevitably a party whose political fortune had been made in opposition and which had learned its politics by conducting a struggle for half a century found difficulty in changing its outlook, in accustoming itself to see problems from the point of view of government, in developing executive efficiency, and in appreciating what were the limits of the practicable. It had to change its entire attitude to the machinery of state and to forget or revise its party philosophy. When it came to power Congress had been not only deeply suspicious of the civil service as its former antagonists, but a section of the party, owing to the Tolstoyan and slightly anarchist ideas of Mr. Gandhi, was sceptical of the value of the administrative machine as

such, and desired to rebuild the state in a much simpler form, with intimate contact between Congress as the governing party and the people. Hence in the early period of their administration a tendency developed for ministers to secure information from, and to use as their executive instrument, not the civil service but the local party committees. A still graver matter was the attempt in some provinces by members of the legislature or prominent local politicians, and indeed ministers themselves, to interfere with the administration of justice. There were inevitably rumours of corruption, of an abuse of patronage in appointments to public service, and of the other evils which go with democratic government. There were allegations that the machinery of administration was deteriorating, and gloomy prophecies of the disasters which would come upon the country with the gradual debasement of standards of efficiency.

These prophecies could of course be taken too tragically ; under a parliamentary régime forecasts of doom will always be made, for hypercriticism is the duty of the opposition. In most provinces the opposition was singularly feeble or the indictment of the governments would have been more severe. If there had been no other cause of alarm than those mentioned, the observer would have been inclined to think that the debit side of the account came to much less than the credit. But unhappily he could not ignore three ominous signs, of much greater moment than the items in the balance-sheet which have been already noticed.

The first of these was the increase in bitter feeling between the Hindu and Moslem communities in almost all the provinces. Its virulence was at first not realised in Great Britain : thus the discovery of its intensity came as a surprise and shock to those who visited India at this period. In these months men in India began for the first time for many decades to envisage civil war as a serious possibility. (The course taken by this feud will be discussed in the next chapter.) The second reason for dis-

quiet was the impasse which seemed to have been reached in the preparations for bringing into force the second part of the Act. The prospect of establishing a federal government at the centre had receded rather than advanced. The princes especially, who had themselves been responsible for the idea of federation, and without whose initiative the proposals for the organisation of the central government would have taken a shape considerably different, sheered off abruptly when certain Congress ministries abetted disturbances in their territory.[1] Thirdly, there was a disquieting change in the position of the central government. This, shorn by the Act of its powers over the provinces, and conscious that it was without a future and that its only task was to hold the fort until it could be superseded by the new federal authority, suffered a progressive loss of influence and prestige. As a result no visitor to India could fail to note a decline of loyalty among all classes to government as such, a growing feeling that the political structure was weakening, and that strength and glory had departed from the Raj.

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With these dangerous tendencies revealing themselves there broke out the European war, and the infant system of government was exposed to conditions as inclement as they could well be. Even for those nations which are least actively engaged, war is a kind of forcing-house which causes all political trends to be accelerated, fosters the more noxious growths, and turns the slow-growing and ordered garden into a jungle. Within a month of the German troops invading Poland the Indian constitution was jeopardised. Too often, war is the first scene and revolution the second ; and it was perhaps because it is at heart a revolutionary and not an evolutionary party,

[1] With some princes this may have been a pretext rather than a cause, for they had already lost their zeal for the federal scheme when they discovered that it involved a real surrender of some of their powers.

and because it sniffed revolution in the air, that Congress was inspired to turn from the road which it had been following and to take a path which was breakneck in appearance and of unknown destination. As a man who fights against his nature but at a moment of stress reverts to his instinctive behaviour, so Congress in this crisis reverted to its old lust of opposition. Its decision may have been a turning-point in Indian history, a renunciation of the possibility of ordered progress and the embracing of a darker fate.

The course of events is well known. Congress objected to India being declared at war by the Governor-General without ratification of the decision by the Central Assembly (the Assembly established by the Act of 1919 and still functioning pending the creation of the federal legislature). It is easy to sympathise with the Congress complaint on this score. Yet the difficulty facing the Government was a real one. All the signs were that if the issue of peace or war had been referred to the Assembly, Congress would have made its approval of war conditional upon certain undertakings by Great Britain. These were that India should be declared independent and that the Act of 1935 should be abandoned and replaced by a measure drafted by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. It is unnecessary to discuss here why Great Britain could not accept these demands. (This is done in Part Two of this book.) The situation in September 1939 was that, if the Assembly had voted, Congress would probably have voted for neutrality ; and in these circumstances it was perhaps wiser to go to war without consulting the Assembly than to enter on it in the teeth of an adverse Congress vote.[1]

Thus whether or not the matter had been debated the result might well have been the same. Congress declared

[1] Perhaps a more weighty criticism of the Government is that it seems to have neglected in the months before the outbreak of war to have discussed with Congress their attitude and to have sought some kind of advance agreement.

that though it condemned the aggression of Germany it regarded Britain as equally tainted, and that the war was merely one between two rival imperialisms with which India could not sully its garments (unless it was made worth its while to do so). It therefore declined to continue political co-operation, and the high command of the party ordered the resignation of the Congress provincial ministries. This meant the suspension of the constitution in seven provinces, since in these it was impossible, owing to the Congress majority in the legislatures, to organise alternative ministries : and power was resumed by the Governors as provided for in such circumstances by the Act. With this there came to an end the first phase in the great constitutional experiment.

The gravity of the Congress decision can hardly be overstated. At a time when all effort should have been concentrated on getting the new machinery of government into working order, and of accustoming the people of India to operate it, the machinery was allowed to stand idle, and, as some feared, to suffer such damage from rot and rust that it would not again be able to be set in motion. Though, as we have seen, the Congress ministries had on the whole acquitted themselves not without credit, their going seems nowhere to have created any great regret, and was in fact followed by a strong rally of the anti-Congress parties, especially of the Moslems. In a country which was habituated to parliamentary institutions this change in political prestige would have been a normal incident in the political life, representing no more than a swing of the political pendulum, and would in no way have endangered the parliamentary institutions themselves. But in India, owing to the critical stage which had been reached in the political experiment, the result was altogether different.

What led the Congress leaders to their disastrous decision can be conjectured but is not certainly known. In India as in all other countries the personal factor is of the greatest consequence, and the deliberations of Con-

gress in those fatal October days can be understood only in the light of the personalities engaged in them. By all accounts the prevailing personality was Jawaharlal Nehru, a man who, though of powerful and logical mind, seems often to base his reasoning upon only half the data. He was supported by Vallabhai Patel, obsessed by the conviction that Great Britain would shortly be brought into such extremities by Germany that it could with ease be squeezed by Congress. By their appeals they seem to have had little difficulty in winning over most of their colleagues to their way of thinking. Probably they argued that Congress had for fifty years been struggling for India's independence ; that the war gave them the best opportunity in the history of the party ; that to neglect it would be to make nonsense of the past endeavours, would be treason to past leaders, and would in future confine Congress to shallows and miseries ; and that the Congress command which had so long preached revolution would appear ridiculous in the eyes of posterity, and even of their immediate following, if when opportunity was placed in their hands they put it away from them. This last argument seems to have carried especial weight, since Congress leaders in general are no less nervous about their following than are, say, film-stars. Furthermore it was pointed out that apart from all other considerations the Congress command dared not, for the sake of their own survival, take a moderate line or associate themselves with the rather drastic and dictatorial methods which Government often has to employ in time of war, since in that case rival claimants to the leadership would steal their thunder and snatch from them the support of the rank and file. Congress is as it were a kind of Cerberus each head of which must try to outbark the others in order to establish its claims to wag the dog's tail ; Congress leaders can be nothing but extreme, at least in outward appearance. These were the arguments for breaking with the British Government. Considerations were doubtless put forward on the other side, and it was probably

suggested that if a good turn was done to the British lion when in distress, the lion would at the end of the war repay in kind ; a proposal which may perhaps be termed the Androcles argument, but which was sharply rejected. Alone of the Congress committee Mrs. Naidu, an affable poetess whose nationalism though intense has never been allowed to mar her common sense or humanity, seems to have been in favour of aiding the British war effort ; Mr. Rajagopalachari, perhaps the ablest of the Congress ministers, seems unfortunately to have been absent from the most vital discussions. Mr. Gandhi began by appealing to reason. "What", he asked, "is the value of freedom to India if Britain and France fail ?" But when he found his colleagues against him he seems to have made little effort to restrain them ; and in this case at least it may be said of him *video meliora proboque deteriora sequor.*

4

Thus, half with resolution, half with misgiving, the Congress took their ominous decision, and Indian politics began their sorry war-time history. The next eighteen months passed in a riot of alarms, conjectures, feelers, schemes, attempted *rapprochements*, repeated disappointments. One section of Congress pressed for an immediate campaign of mass civil disobedience ; another, presided over by the Mahatma, favoured a more temporising policy, partly out of a true appreciation that they would be disserving India's interests if by weakening the British war effort they increased the chance of German victory, partly out of a belief that by a policy of waiting — interspersed with vague but ominous threats — they would draw from the British the undertakings refused in October. Meanwhile on the British side the Government, anxious to persuade Congress to return to office, reaffirmed in the clearest possible terms its resolve to assist in the earliest possible implementation of a Dominion Constitution, and on more than one occasion invited the party leaders into

immediate participation in the executive at the centre.[1] But Congress remained irreconcilable.

Congress was not the only party which repudiated the constitution. Its great rival, the Moslem League, showed itself scarcely less unaccommodating, for though it was prepared to co-operate with the British Government in its war effort, this was on terms which would have meant the abandonment or drastic revision of the principles inspiring the Act of 1935, and which would probably also have ruled out the hope of an ultimate reconciliation with Congress. The League in fact took up, towards the British Government, an attitude hardly less stiff than that of Congress, partly perhaps out of the belief that the less eager it showed itself for an agreement the more favourable would become the terms offered to it. As it has been nicely put, Congress and the League sniffed at the morsels offered them, and like petted and fastidious animals turned away and sulked. Curiously enough, the parties which showed the most whole-hearted desire to co-operate with Great Britain in the prosecution of the war were those which previously the Government had most distrusted — the miscellaneous and much divided factions of the trade unions and the extreme left.

At the time of writing there seems to be a complete deadlock. Indeed the whole future of the parliamentary experiment has been placed in doubt. By its very nature parliamentary government can only function if all the main parties co-operate in working it; if these boycott it, a parliamentary system can no more continue than can a cricket match if one side declines to bat. Whatever may be the abstract merits of the parliamentary system, and whatever opinion may be held as to the unwisdom of Indian parties in declining to operate it, it must be recognised that it would be impossible to force the system down the country's throat against its manifest will. Therefore although hope of the eventual success of the parliamentary system should not be abandoned, it is prudent to con-

[1] Declaration of August 8th, 1940.

sider whether there are alternative lines of progress. The essence of current thought in England is that if India rejects the British proposal of establishing a constitution of the Westminster type, then India itself must undertake the responsibility of devising a more satisfactory system. This view was officially declared by the Secretary of State in the British Parliament in August 1940, when he proposed that the drafting of a new constitution should be in the main referred to a representative Indian body. But unhappily here also the party divisions in India have as yet stood in the way of constructive action. The condition for the creation of such an organ charged with the drafting of a constitution is that the major parties should be in agreement as to its composition, since otherwise the constitution which resulted would not be freely accepted by all major groups, and would in consequence, for the reasons discussed in Chapter Eight, be in the conditions of India unworkable. And up to the present the parties have been unwilling even to discuss the possibilities of agreement. The proposals of Congress are anathema to the Moslem League, those of the League anathema to Congress.

Thus both sides hold aloof and Great Britain has no alternative but to resume — temporarily — the direction of affairs. Until Indian parties can find some basis for co-operation the hands of Great Britain are tied.

In all this gloomy prospect there is perhaps one gleam of light. In the four provinces where Congress did not gain a majority in the legislature — Bengal, the Punjab, Sind, and Assam [1] — the parliamentary system is being still carried on under the terms of the Act. This certainly is of no small consequence, since these provinces comprise nearly 100 million people and cover 300,000 square miles. It is of even greater interest that the reason why the parliamentary system in these provinces — in spite of grave communal problems — seems to have been at least

[1] For a short time a Congress government existed in Assam, but was replaced by a coalition government.

relatively successful is that the ministries have been formed not exclusively from single parties but have been coalitions ; and this may prove a fact of much significance when discussion of the future constitution is once more opened up.

CHAPTER TEN

PARTIES

I

It may perhaps be profitable to dwell at rather greater length on certain features of the history of India's constitutional experiment, and especially to study what it has revealed of the composition and temper of the main political parties. For it is from the spirit and intentions of the parties that the success or failure of a parliamentary system can most accurately be forecast; and moreover, if it should unhappily prove necessary to try to devise a constitution on rather different lines from those hitherto envisaged, the first requirement will be that this should be adapted to the Indian party structure.

A scrutiny of the party structure in India shows at once two outstanding facts. The first is that the growth of one of the chief parties — the Congress — took place *before* the Indian parliaments had achieved maturity, this being the converse of party history in England. The second fact is that the aims and organisation of the parties are different from those of political parties in England, as becomes very plain if we examine in detail their records and programmes.

2

The party to which attention first turns is Congress, since, as the largest and best organised, it has the largest share in deciding the shape of events. The politics of British India have for long been dominated by Congress, and in the whole world there is perhaps no political party which altogether resembles it. It is a collection of almost every conceivable interest and type of personality. It includes millionaires, mill-workers, landlords, peasants, saints, gangsters, professors, experts in international affairs, parochialists, liberals, anarchists, communists,

ascetics, fanatical Moslems, and fanatical Hindus ; and its liability is a large supply of visionaries.

> A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed
> Of the true old enthusiastic breed.
> 'Gainst form and order they their power employ
> Nothing to build and all things to destroy.
> But far more numerous was the herd of such
> Who think too little and who talk too much.

Its annual session—in atmosphere part gipsy encampment, part football match, part parish bazaar — must be, next to the Nazi rallies at Nuremberg, the most astonishing political sight of the modern world, indeed in its rustic simplicity even more successfully ostentatious than the Nazi glitter and display. It claims to have over four million adherents and is the most powerful organisation in India ; yet its central organisation consists of a shabby building and a minute staff of clerks, and its members appear to communicate with each other chiefly by means of public speeches and the press. In different provinces it is dominated by different interests, in this respect resembling the great American parties, which in different states often stand for different and even conflicting programmes and represent different social classes. In the United Provinces it is the party of the intelligentsia, the peasant, and the mill-worker ; in Bihar, of the minor landed gentry ; in Bengal, of the professional upper middle class ; in Madras it is pro-Brahman ; in Bombay it tends to be anti-Brahman. Like Hinduism itself it finds room for every opinion, every class, and every eccentricity. It is so diverse that its leaders dare not declare a clear-cut social or economic programme, and its members are held together by no ties except, firstly, nationalist feeling whose most common form of expression is agitation against Great Britain, and secondly, the desire to capture the party for their own sectional objects.

Congress is the anti-British party *par excellence.* The first in the field in the struggle with British ' imperialism ', alone among Indian parties it has carried on the contest

unremittingly and without wavering. From time to time it has been assisted by other parties but has always retained the role of senior partner. Thus its leaders have become convinced, as in the circumstances they could hardly fail to be, that Congress in some mystical way was identical with the Indian nation, and that other parties were on a lower plane, were not *in pari materia*. They felt themselves the true custodian of the national interests, and that on all major issues their judgment was in some way of superior value to that of other parties. This has had the deepest, though almost unconscious, influence on Congress ideas of the future government of the country. For a party which conceives itself to be the true expression of the national will could hardly, once the nation had obtained its freedom from alien rule, contemplate that government could be carried on by any other party than itself. Congress and opposition were contradictory terms. If Congress was the national party, a rival party which came to power would be in some way anti-national.

The problem is thus raised how a party with these pretensions can be accommodated in the framework of parliamentary government. Congress would claim that the very question is absurd, since it has consistently made itself the champion of the parliamentary system. Yet its adoption of parliamentary ideas was to some extent fortuitous, due to the fact that it considered itself the party of progress and that in its formative years the ideal of parliament was the most advanced and fashionable; moreover it was convinced that, as the best organised party, it would in the event of parliamentary government being introduced enjoy a more or less permanent majority. So long as a parliamentary régime means a Congress Raj, Congress is content with parliamentary institutions: the test would come if with a swing of public sentiment Congress faced the prospect of prolonged exile from office.

The situation is the more curious in that in its own internal affairs Congress can only in a peculiar sense be said to be a democratic organisation. This has been

made clear from a number of incidents, the most striking of which was the controversy over the election in 1939 of Mr. Subash Chandra Bose as Congress president, an affair the significance of which does not seem to have been properly appreciated. The facts are as follows. According to Congress practice the election of the president is by the votes of delegates chosen by local Congress constituencies ; and Mr. Bose, who had been president in the previous year and was standing for a second term, received a substantial majority. His election was, however, very distasteful to Mr. Gandhi and to the group of Congress leaders who formed the so-called high command (owing, it is said, to disputes which had risen between them and Mr. Bose during his previous term of office). Mr. Gandhi, indeed, had recommended the electors to vote for the rival candidate, but his advice was given with such subtlety and caution that it was apparently misunderstood. Mr. Gandhi's supporters alleged that if the delegates had in fact comprehended what was the Mahatma's wish they would have voted against Mr. Bose ; and the fact that they had misconstrued his advice was held in some way to have invalidated their votes and morally if not legally to have rendered void the election of Mr. Bose. They set themselves therefore to undo the work of the polls, launching a great appeal to the people over the heads of the erring delegates, and exploiting to the full the holiness and prestige of the Mahatma (then standing very high because of a dispute which had chanced at this moment to break out between him and the Viceroy) ; and at the ensuing full assembly of the Congress party they secured a resolution that Mr. Bose should choose a working committee (the central committee which controls the party) only with the advice and consent of Mr. Gandhi. Thereupon it was sufficient that the Mahatma should withhold this advice, and Mr. Bose was forced to resign.[1]

[1] Mr. Gandhi's position *vis-à-vis* the Congress cabinet is thus almost precisely similar to that of the Japanese army and navy *vis-à-vis* the Japanese cabinet.

If this incident is described at such length it is because it shows in a remarkable manner the true nature of Congress as a party certainly with mass following and mass support but controlled and dominated by a small group as authoritarian in its outlook as are (in the Congress view) the British officials whom it desires to supplant. Indeed in the circumstances of India it was hardly possible for a mass party such as Congress to develop on any other lines. The governing fact is that an outstanding personality can secure a gigantic following which is prepared to vote as he wills and act as he directs, but which is not prepared to follow day-to-day politics with attention, to organise its own local committees, or to attempt from below upwards to control or influence its leader. Indian politics are certainly of the popular variety, but they have a mediæval rather than a modern character, and a remarkably close parallel to the Mahatma and Congress is Peter the Hermit and his mass following of proletarian crusaders.

To sum up: Congress is not a political party in the sense known in the Western democratic countries, but a political mass movement of the kind which from time to time surges through a nation causing people of the most divergent types and interests to band themselves together and follow a leader. It is obsessed by the idea that Congress alone has a divine right to govern India, and can brook no brother near the throne. It is dominated by a small clique which aims at using the power thus under its control to step into the shoes of the present administration. Though this clique stands for democracy it is anything but democratic in its attitude to its following, and it is at least doubtful whether, in the event of the revolution it desires, it would persevere in its democratic ideals if its hold on power should be threatened.

This description would be repudiated by Congressmen. But it serves no helpful purpose to ignore the genuine alarm which during its period of office Congress seems to have occasioned.

A true view of Congress and its aims makes much clear that is otherwise obscure. It explains the rigid discipline of its members. It explains the pontifical manner which so much irritates its opponents. It explains its uncompromising attitude towards opposition. It explains also one of the most curious features evident during this period, the tendency for major issues to be debated only perfunctorily in those provincial legislative assemblies in which Congress had a substantial majority. In Western countries parliament mirrors the conflicts between organised groups and interests and is the forum where the great issues of policy are discussed ; and it was expected that in India the provincial assemblies would in the same way become the centre of the local political life. In fact this did not happen. Debates were often unexpectedly dull ; they lacked the spirit of reality ; there was too often an air of listlessness, a feeling among members that the assembly did not count and that the true centre of political animation was to be found in the Congress committee-rooms. Congress with its fifty-year traditions is older than any other popular institution in India, and of the assemblies it is able to say that before they were, it was. In the eyes of its supporters, Congress is the central, dominating, all-comprehending institution, and their loyalty is to party rather than to parliament. Thus the assemblies must serve Congress, not Congress the assemblies. If the assemblies can prove their usefulness to Congress they may be permitted to survive ; if not, away with them.

This attitude of Congress towards parliament was brought out even more clearly by the actions of the clique which rules the Congress party at the centre. The theory of parliamentary government is that a ministry remains in power as long as it has the confidence of the legislatures. But according to the practice developed by Congress the provincial cabinets were in fact made responsible to a person known as the 'zonal dictator', who was a nominee of the central committee of the Congress party. The 'dictator' was not a member of the provincial ministry

or legislature: yet no action could be taken by the ministers without his consent. It was on him and not on the assembly that their eyes were turned; and it was his favour that Congress members of the legislature had to seek, not that of their constituents. In such circumstances there was little wonder that the atmosphere of the assemblies was constrained and dead. They wilted under the local Congress "bosses" as parliaments in Europe wilt before a Nazi protector.

The peak of this practice was reached over the resignation of the Congress ministries which ended this sorry history. In all the provinces concerned the Congress ministries enjoyed substantial majorities in the legislatures, and thus according to the ordinary ideas of parliamentary government there was no shadow of reason for their departure. It is believed that neither their electoral supporters, their party in the assemblies, nor the ministers themselves desired the resignation. But the cabinets were ordered out at the crack of the whip of the 'zonal dictators': and it was perhaps this more than any other single event which, by revealing the powerlessness of the rank and file in the legislatures to control Congress ministers, finally confirmed the opponents of Congress in their determination not to accept any system of parliamentary government which would lead to a permanent Congress ministry.

This willingness of Congress to side-track the parliamentary machine is one of the most significant facts of its period of administration. Looking back on this time it is hard not to see in its record a kind of conspiracy, conscious or unconscious, to substitute the machinery of the party organisation for the machinery of the state. Thus the local Congress committees tried to arrogate to themselves the powers of local government; the provincial committees began to supplant the provincial assemblies; and the Congress central cabinet at Wardha became a rival national authority to the Government of India at Delhi. Had Congress remained in power, and had these

tactics not excited, as in fact they did, the suspicion and resolute opposition of the minorities, there might have insensibly taken place a great revolution. The centre of power would have passed from the organs of government lawfully established to the private organs of Congress which were unknown to the constitution. The sceptre would have been transferred from the state to the party caucus.

It is impossible to view this trend with complacency. For it is no other than the trend which has created the Fascist Government in Italy, the Communist Government in Russia, and the régime of Hitler.

What of the future of Congress? For the past twenty years the party has dominated the political scene, and there is a disposition to think of it as a permanent feature of the landscape. This it will not necessarily be. It is compounded of explosive elements, and that it may one day blow up and disintegrate is a fact which must be kept constantly in mind by all those responsible for framing the constitution. Thereby the whole face of Indian politics would be changed. But the results which would follow from this combustion are so difficult to predict that it is scarcely profitable to speculate about them. Certainly the attempt by Congress to establish the Party State would be brought to an end. But the splitting up of Congress would not of itself bring India any nearer to the substitution of tolerance for fierce hostility which is the greatest need of its political life, nor would it necessarily make any easier the setting up of a united government enjoying the confidence of a great mass of the people. In fact many grave though different problems would have been created. Scarcely less dangerous to parliamentary government than an over-mighty organisation which like Congress dwarfs the lawful institutions of the state is the existence of a multitude of splinter parties, each too weak to command the allegiance of more than a very limited section of the population. This was the state of affairs in post-war Germany, and the result was weak cabinets, an

executive constantly changing in personnel, a policy which failed to inspire confidence or to give to the people the leadership they desired, and eventually led to the revolution which changed radically the basis of state and society. Owing to the strong organisation of Congress, India has as yet had little experience of such conditions ; but the politics of the province of Sind are perhaps a foretaste of what may happen.

3

Congress, though the predominant party, is not the only mass organisation ; and the influence of the Moslem League is likely to be no less considerable. Like Congress, the Moslem League cuts across the economic and social divisions of society. But whereas with Congress the tie holding the party together is anti-British feeling, with the League it is the Islamic religion. Both parties are nationalist, but the nationalism of the one is directed against the British, of the other against the Hindus, and especially against Congress, which the Moslems regard as aiming essentially at Hindu supremacy.

A communal problem is unhappily no unusual thing in modern politics. It is a problem which everywhere arises when a society is not homogeneous but is divided into separate and rival communities and when each community fears to be subjected to government by another. Such was the root of the tension between Sudeten Germans and Czechs, between Croats and Serbs, between Ukrainians and Poles, and such is the cause of the impasse in Ireland and Palestine.

In India the Moslem community, though numbering over ninety millions, is a minority of the total population.[1] Thus it is not surprising to find the com-

[1] The Moslems live chiefly in the North but do not form a homogeneous bloc. In the North-West Frontier Province they are 92 per cent of the population ; in the Punjab, 57 per cent ; in the United Provinces, 15 per cent ; in Bihar and Orissa, 12 per cent ; in Bengal, 55 per cent. In Madras, they are no more than 7 per cent.

munal question in the forefront of Indian politics. Nevertheless there is much dispute as to how real is in fact the communal bitterness. For example, the nationalist leaders deny that there is anything like the same material for a communal struggle as in the European countries mentioned above. They allege that the Moslem leaders and the Moslem League though very vocal have only a comparatively small following, and this, they say, is because the bulk of the Moslem community is not a political minority in the same sense as are the minority communities in Europe. Their case is that while the upper classes among the Moslems may feel themselves to be divided by a deep gulf from the Hindus, this is not true of the Moslem masses. These — the Moslem peasants and craftsmen — speak more or less the same language as their Hindu comrades, face the same material problems, and share the same local ways and traditions. They differ from the Hindus in religion — but, as far as the masses are concerned, that is no obstacle to political co-operation.

Some of the nationalists would carry their argument further and allege that the intrusion of the communal problem into politics would never have occurred but for the British Government. According to them, the communal hostility has been fostered by the British in an effort to divide and govern. In support of this they point out that before the rise of Indian nationalism there had been little communal feeling. And they claim to be able to identify the measures by which it was deliberately stirred to life. These, it is said, were the innovation of separate electorates in the reforms of 1909, and the establishment of a communal quota in appointments to the services.

This is the way in which the nationalists analyse the communal problem. In short, their argument is that if the realities of the political situation are considered and not the speeches of the Moslem leaders, the communal problem can be regarded as relatively unimportant. And there is no doubt that many hold this view with passionate

sincerity. Yet it is very hard for the foreign observer, sympathetic as he may be with their aspiration, to feel that their picture is the true one.

It is clear, for example, that the fact that communal feeling was relatively quiescent in the nineteenth century proves nothing as to the reality of the communal divisions. During that century Hindus and Moslems were alike subjected to British authoritarian rule. Neither could hope to prevail over the other. Thus the main cause of dissension was removed. But, as was pointed out in the Simon report, the setting up of representative institutions altered the situation. Power was, as it were, placed on the counter, and an intense competition started between the communities to secure it. The moment representative government came into the picture the Moslems insisted on separate electorates. This was in 1909. Subsequently, the moment it was realised that responsible government meant the control of the executive by the majority of the legislature, and above all when it was realised that this meant Hindu government, the Moslems promptly reacted against responsible government, or, alternatively, against a united India. Thus by a kind of electrolysis, politics had sorted out the communities which before had superficially appeared so nearly fused. The past, buried so long as the Pax Britannica prevailed, was resurrected. The feud was taken up from where it had been dropped —

> Two households both alike in dignity
> From ancient grudge wake to new mutiny.

Perhaps it may be salutary to set side by side with the nationalist argument the following statement made to the writer by a young Moslem politician :

> " You must learn in England ", he said, " that Hindus and Moslems are two distinct peoples. It is not simply a question of religions. We Moslems have different laws, customs, habits, clothes, language, and a cosmopolitan outlook which leads us to sympathise

more with Islam abroad than with non-Mohammedan Indians at home. Moreover, our separateness from the Hindus is due not only to the peculiarity of our own institutions, but also to the hostile attitude towards us of the Hindus. These, under the influence of caste ideas, regard non-Hindus as unclean and refuse to associate or intermarry with them. Why then should we accept in theory the idea of a homogeneous Indian nation, when Hindu practice so blatantly proves that it does not exist?

"The nationalist argument that communal feeling exists only among our upper classes is not true. You ask me for proof of this. Look at the United Provinces. There the Congress have tried to overthrow the League by contesting the Moslem constituencies and appealing to the Moslem masses over the head of the leaders of the League. What has been the result? A series of crushing electoral defeats for Congress.

"As we and the Hindus thus regard each other as alien peoples, you cannot expect us to acquiesce any more readily in being governed by Hindus than you in England would submit to the government of an alien power. Democratic government would in fact mean nothing less than this. We shall be governed by a Hindu majority. Self-government for India on a democratic basis will mean the transfer of power from the British to the Hindus. It will be a transaction carried out over our heads. We shall gain nothing and may lose a great deal.

"It is true that the Hindu nationalists deny any intention of interfering with our Moslem culture. But in judging a political situation it is necessary to take into account not only the circumstances obvious at the present but also the pattern of past events, and to assume, unless reason can be shown to the contrary, that trends which have been operative in the past are likely to continue in the future. One of the most striking facts of Indian history is the tremendous

absorptive power of Hindu culture. We Moslems never forget this, and rightly or wrongly we think of Hinduism as a sort of deadly fungus which needs to be constantly fought against. The special menace is the caste system so antipathetic to our Moslem egalitarian outlook and so cruel to those at the bottom of the scale. We are genuinely apprehensive lest we, who were once the conquerors of India, and who still instinctively feel towards the Hindus something of the superiority of a martial towards a non-military people, should be degraded to be among the lower castes of Hinduism. You may of course suggest that there is a certain absurdity in supposing that a people numbering nearly a quarter of the population and pleased to consider itself its most warlike element should be ensnared in this way, but we cannot help noticing that in the modern world the powers of the state for successful persecution have been greatly enhanced. The Russian Government has practically crushed Islam in Russian Turkestan. If militant Hinduism secured undisputed control of the machine of government in India, and began an anti-Moslem crusade, the fate of Islam there might be no better."

This may be a presentation of the Moslem view as extreme as was the previous statement of the nationalist thesis. But it is one commonly met with. To the foreign observer both the Moslem and the Hindu pictures seem distortions — though which is the more distorted it would be hard to say. One thing is, however, certain. Since the coming into force of the Act of 1935 Indian politics have been dominated by the communal feud. And the Moslem League has with extraordinary suddenness grown into a mass movement scarcely less formidable than Congress itself.

The League had been founded in 1908, but, before the passing of the Act, had been little more than a club of Moslem notables. At the elections of 1937 its showing

was only very moderate. But soon afterwards it found its opportunity and, under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah (a very astute politician), took it with both hands. There is no nutriment which produces such a sensational growth in the stature of a political movement as persecution mania, and in the circumstances which developed when the Act came into operation the League found a situation ideal for successful agitation.

The rise of the League seems to date from the decision of Congress to form ministries which were preponderantly Hindu, and in which such Moslems as were included were those who belonged to the Congress party and had accepted Hindu leadership. In acting in this way Congress did not infringe the letter of the constitution, and it could moreover point to the English experience to show that where one party had a clear majority in the legislature the most satisfactory course was to form a cabinet belonging exclusively to that party. Yet reflection might have shown that in this matter the practice in England could not be a safe guide. For in England there was no minority problem : but in India unless the minorities were represented in the government they would have a deep and genuine sense of insecurity. This proved in fact to be the result. Especially in two of the Congress provinces — the United Provinces and Bihar — the Moslem minority, which formed no small part of the population, was stirred to its depths by the advent of a Hindu administration. In the United Provinces the bitterness was especially deep because the Moslems were given to understand that before the elections Congress had made an informal agreement for a Hindu-Moslem coalition, and that, after its surprising electoral success, it repudiated this compact. What truth there was in this story it is hard to say, but it is certain that after a few months of Congress rule the Moslem population was full of resentment, and, what was more ominous, of unfeigned apprehension.

Thus was the way prepared for the rise of the Moslem League. Soon it was able to raise the cry that in the

United Provinces all Islam was in danger. Moreover, it painted a dismal picture of what would befall should the federal structure be completed and should a Hindu central government be formed. The League had only to speak the language, voice the complaints, and follow the tactics which minority parties have so successfully used in recent years in Europe, and its success was sensational.[1]

The bitterness which developed came as a surprise even to those long resident in India, and they were alarmed to notice such signs, trivial in themselves but indicating a deep social malady, as the breaking-off of long-standing friendships between individual Hindus and Moslems, and the tendency, unknown a generation before, for Hindu and Moslem boys to keep severely aloof in their play. As Hyder Ali once over the Carnatic, so did Mr. Jinnah hang like a thunder-cloud over all India. In the Northern provinces there were the signs of a mobilising of forces ;

[1] What substance there was in the complaints of the League against the Congress governments it is hard to say. Certainly, in speaking of " atrocities " its use of language was exaggerated and absurd. The chief Moslem grievances appear to have been that Congress governments, by their control of schools and by other means, sought to extend the use of the sanskritised Hindi at the expense of the persianised Urdu ; that the flag of the Congress party was treated as a national flag ; that the singing of a Hindu national anthem was encouraged which contained sentiments objectionable to Islam ; that in schools Moslem children were compelled to salute the portrait of Mr. Gandhi ; that Congress discriminated against Moslems in the public services ; and that they abetted the popular movements in the states governed by Moslem princes.

Compared with what minorities suffered in certain European states under parliamentary government, the indictment is perhaps not very startling ; moreover, to many of the complaints Congress could make a reasonable and convincing reply. But in matters of this kind the question of right or wrong is often beside the point, and the fact which has to be investigated is whether public feeling has been roused, justly or unjustly, to a pitch where the co-operation of the communities has become acutely difficult. There can be little doubt that in many provinces the Congress governments, whatever the reason might be, had been unfortunate enough to rouse deep suspicion, resentment, and fear among the Moslems. This was not only in the towns, where political feeling is most inflammable, but extended also to the villages, due, it is alleged, to the high-handed attitude and the assumption of authority by local Congress committees, which were in most cases overwhelmingly Hindu, and which took advantage of the advent of Congress governments to work off their private grudges.

and some observers were inclined to see a Palestine in the offing.

A still more dangerous stage in the crisis was reached with the outbreak of the European war. The war-time tactics of Congress and its attitude towards the British Government can be understood only in the light of Congress relations with the Moslems. Not unnaturally, Congress detested the Moslem League. As Congress conceives its own relation to the people in terms not unlike that of the judges of Israel to the Hebrews, it was with something of the indignation of Moses when the Jews revolted that it perceived the Moslem masses seduced by the Moslem League.[1] Nevertheless it was impressed by the fact that the Moslems were leaving the fold ; and this

> They more unkindly took
> Because the fleece accompanies the flock.

Thus when the war came it saw in it the heaven-sent opportunity for nipping the Moslem movement in the bud. Hence the Congress pressure on the British, which — at least in the eyes of the Moslems and of many non-Congress Hindus — was intended to force the Government into conniving at the establishment of what would have been virtually a Congress dictatorship.

Perhaps the most sinister feature of this quarrel is that it has led the Moslem League to declare that there is no satisfactory solution of the communal problem except the division of India into separate states. This has brought it into alliance with the 'Pakistan movement' — a movement which was formerly relatively obscure but which has now been elevated into one of the most formidable forces in Indian politics.

The Pakistan scheme has been current for some years. Its aim is the setting up of a separate and sovereign Moslem state in North India : the word 'Pakistan' is said to

[1] It regarded Mr. Jinnah as a species of Iago, one who without any adequate reason and out of malevolence has plotted a great disaster.

have been coined from the initial letters of the regions to be comprised within this state — Punjab, Afghanistan (*i.e.* North-West Frontier Province), Kashmir, and Sind. Some of its sponsors are thinking in very grandiose terms, and nurse the hope that Pakistan may be the nucleus of a great federation of the Moslem states of the Middle East which should revive the glories of the Omayyads and the Abbasids. The history of the movement is not without curiosity. Championed by the poet Sir Muhammed Iqbal, it seems (like other hazardous political ideas) to have found its first home at Cambridge University, among a group of romantically inclined Moslem undergraduates ; and some of these, maintaining touch with one another in later life, on their return to India propagated the idea with diligence and an almost religious zeal. For some years they had little to show for their devotion. But they alone among their community have had a clear-cut and striking programme based on positive proposals instead of on protest and fretfulness ; and with the growing communal tension the Moslem League has been impelled into their arms.

The promulgation of the idea of Pakistan may prove a fateful date in Indian history. It revealed the extent, perhaps not hitherto suspected, to which the nationalist movement had bifurcated. When seedlings of diverse kind first appear above the soil they are often too small to be differentiated, and it is only when they have grown to a certain height that the varieties can be detected. So it was with Hindu nationalism and Moslem nationalism. At the start they were indistinguishable, but in the past years the Moslem nationalist movement has separated itself from the Hindu and has spread throughout the community, at first slowly but in the last years with the virulence of an epidemic. In all reflection on Indian politics in the next few years it will be necessary to bear in mind that among Moslem youth — at least among the urban classes — there is developing one of those romantic, turbulent movements which have been among the great

driving forces of human history. The Moslem community, though still much less well organised than the Hindus, has perhaps now a greater vitality. The Moslem resurgence is one of those almost elemental happenings by which the political life of a country is ultimately decided. It can be attributed to no individual or group : and Muhammed Iqbal, who is often described as the founder of the Moslem renaissance, was a product rather than a generator of the movement.

It must not be supposed that the Moslem community is entirely united, or that there are not many eminent Moslem personalities who still stand for the older ideals of co-operation with the Hindus. Indeed the President of Congress in the year 1940–41 was himself a Moslem, and there are many Moslems who are still members of the Congress party (though these are fewer in number than Congress represents and, curiously enough, seem mostly to belong to the circles which in matters of social reform are extremely conservative). The Moslems of the North-West Frontier Province continue to give Congress whole-hearted support. This seems, however, to be due to the fact that in that province the Moslems are in such an overwhelming majority that there is no communal problem : in consequence the Moslem nationalists, who have a long-standing quarrel with Great Britain (rising out of the defence problems of the frontier), are glad to be assured that they have Hindu allies in the rest of India ; and the waves of the Moslem romantic movement have only just began to beat on their remote mountain land. The Frontier Moslems may for some time yet find that their understanding with Congress is too convenient to be terminated. The fact remains that elsewhere the dynamic part of the Moslem community has repudiated Congress. The Islamic soul has gone out from the camp of the All-India nationalists.

The Moslems in the Congress ranks are nowadays very much like the Protestants that used to be found in the Irish Home Rule movement, a façade which did not

affect the increasingly passionate opposition of Ulster. Mr. Jinnah is to a certain extent in the position of a Carson.

Sometimes the attempt is made to explain that this bitter political struggle is not really a clash of nationalities or cultures, but is no more than the economic class war disguised in religious garb. Thus it is pointed out that in some provinces the Hindus are money-lenders and the Moslems the peasants whom they exploit ; in others the position is reversed (the Pathan money-lender is the terror of India). Power in high finance rests chiefly with the Hindus, and the Moslems allege that the commercial policy of Congress, directed to high tariffs and the fostering of industry, would exploit the Moslem agricultural producer in favour of the Hindu capitalist and mill-worker. Yet these divisions, real though they are, do not explain the communal conflict ; the roots of communalism lie deep in a past when the economic circumstances were altogether dissimilar.

The economic conflict has nevertheless without any doubt intensified the bitterness. A very important issue between the communities is the appointment to official positions. In all countries where there is communal bitterness this is a cause of tension. In India it is especially so, because a vast, elaborate, and relatively well-paid bureaucratic machine is superimposed upon an economy which is relatively simple ; thus the attraction of government service is incomparably greater than of any other walk of life, and official appointment dazzles the eyes of many as the supreme prize which life has to offer. The flare-up of communal hostility results in no small measure from the fact that under the new political system it is possible for the Hindus to challenge the favoured position in the subordinate public services which the Moslems in such provinces as the United Provinces have, for a variety of reasons, for some years enjoyed ; and similarly in Bengal, where the state of affairs is reversed, the Moslems are seeking to oust the Hindus from their entrenched privileges. With the likelihood of still graver consequences

the dispute has extended to the army, which in composition is still Moslem to an extent disproportionate to the Moslem percentage of the total population, and which represents a very important source of profit to the Moslem community. To justify in theory the Moslem preponderance in the army is not easy; to expect the Moslems to surrender it without murmur is impossible.

In discussing the communal question it is all too easy to convey the impression that every Indian is a communalist and that no voice calls for moderation or compromise. In fact there are large numbers who are weary of the whole subject and deplore it as distracting attention from more weighty matters. Moreover, there are circumstances which may cause an eventual easing of the tension. One is the growing religious scepticism of the educated younger generations of both Moslems and Hindus, and the tendency for political interest to centre to an increasing extent on economic questions. Another is that the conception of Islam as a nationality in itself, regardless of race or religion, seems to be out of date. The Turks are entirely nationalist, the Arabs nearly so, and if a constitutional *modus vivendi* could be found in India it might well be that Indian Moslems would again become good Indian patriots. But it is false optimism to expect an early improvement. Political life tends to run in grooves, and it often takes some great national shock to put a final end to quarrels which to all rational seeming are obsolete and archaic. The way to office is through communal politics; party machines have been created; and the division between Hindu and Moslem would probably persist even if all religious belief and peculiar customs vanished from both sides. In Lilliput the dispute between Big-Endians and Little-Endians was not as to the breaking of egg-shells but as to the spoils of office — and this is the common end of religious faction.

4

Congress and the Moslem League are the two parties which in the circumstances of the past three years have played the decisive parts. But in a review of the political situation the subsidiary parties should not be overlooked, since some have contributed openly or covertly to the movement of events, and some may be of greater consequence to-morrow than to-day.

A rather obscure role is played by the Hindu Mahasabha, a Hindu communal organisation avowedly pursuing the aim of Hindu supremacy, which the Moslems allege is the secret object of Congress. Though numerically not very strong except in Bengal, the Mahasabha has considerable influence inside Congress, and its tactics are perhaps less to advance to power by open means than to persuade Congress to adopt a communal policy. It is sometimes suggested that just because the Mahasabha does not pretend to represent the whole of India, but recognises itself as the champion of one community, it may in practice be more ready to compromise with the Moslems, possibly on the basis of wider powers for the provincial governments in the predominantly Moslem provinces. The Mahasabha is, however, unlikely to agree to the Pakistan project, whatever the form in which it is presented.

The Mahasabha differs radically from Congress over the issue of non-violence. Indeed its great ambition seems to be to revive the military glories of the Hindus, still cherished in the traditions of the princes of Rajputana.

As militant as the Mahasabha on the Hindu side are the Khaksars on the Moslem side. These, whose name literally translated means 'Dusty' or 'Humble' ones, are less a political party than a Moslem private army, whose field of operation is the Punjab and the United Provinces. About this organisation there are a number of interesting facts. It is more proletarian than the Moslem League and less under the control of monied interests. Like the

League it reflects the romantic revival in the Moslem community, but it caters more than does the League for the martial ardour and desire for discipline which is appearing among Moslems, at least in the cities. It is avowedly modelled on the German National Socialist party. Its members wear quasi-military uniforms and, like the German labour corps, carry spades as their emblems. They submit to harsh treatment from their officers and use still more violent methods against their opponents. Their programme, like that of the Nazis, is a vague kind of socialism, and the party thrives by denouncing all those who at present enjoy political authority or economic affluence.[1] The begetter of the movement, who has adopted the title of Allama Mashriqi, which means the 'Scholar of the East', is an unusual personage who, before taking to politics, had distinguished himself at Cambridge and had served with competence in the Indian Educational Service. What are his aims it is hard to say, and possibly he has not formulated them even to himself but prefers to keep his powder dry and to perfect his organisation, confident that if ever Indian politics become unusually disturbed he will have at his disposal an instrument which will give him formidable influence. At the moment he finds himself in prison, his followers having behaved too exuberantly at Lahore, and his party compares his incarceration with that of Hitler in 1923 at Landsberg-am-Lech.[2]

Other parties are likely to be of less account. The able and sincere Dr. Ambedkar strives to organise the 60 million untouchables, but is hampered by lack of funds and of competent lieutenants. His object is to fight the power of the high-caste Hindus, and this makes him an enemy of Congress. But his aim receives only lukewarm support from his own community, since the mass of these

[1] Including such Moslem leaders as Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Punjab Prime Minister.

[2] The Allama met Hitler before Hitler came to power. Khaksars say that all Hitler's best ideas resulted from this interview.

do not so much desire to overthrow the Hindu system as to be admitted into the fold ; and whatever part they may play in the future they are for the present unlikely to prove a dynamic force. Another Hindu party opposed to Congress is that of the Justiceites ; this is, however, limited to Madras ; its speciality is Brahman-baiting ; and it is losing rather than gaining ground (though there are signs that if it raises the cry of home rule for Dravidian India it may recover the popularity which it enjoyed a decade or two ago). The Sikh parties are of little importance except in the Punjab, though their attitude would become an All-India question if it were decided to set up Pakistan as a separate state. Of the non-communal parties, the most important are the Liberals, in talent the most distinguished but in political weight unhappily the least effective ; and the Forward Bloc, a federation of the socialist and radical sections which have either seceded from Congress or are restive and suspect within it. The rather peculiar party organisation of Bengal need perhaps not be described since it is of local rather than national interest.

Very recently there has been formed a Radical People's Democratic Party. Its inspiring personality is the former communist Mr. M. N. Roy, and its object is to rally the left-wing groups in a movement to support the Government in the war against Germany. Thus it is an anti-Congress party. What will be its strength and its fortunes it is too early to say.

These parties represent the various interests and factions in India society. They are bidding against each other for power, entering into alliances of convenience, using the parliamentary institutions as long as they are convenient, but, except in the case of the Liberals, it can perhaps hardly be said of any that it has adopted representative government as a principle to which it is unshakeably attached irrespective of the advantage which it may immediately snatch from this cause.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DANGERS

THE peculiarities of the party structure are not the only impediment to the solution of India's political problem. In the years following the introduction of the Act of 1935 it became apparent that the nature of Indian society was rather different from what it had seemed to those who participated in the Round Table Conferences. The practical experience of these few recent years has been more instructive than all the elaborate investigation of the previous decade, and there are perhaps now few who would not say that during the Conferences an insufficient regard was paid to the dangers of social convulsion in India which threaten the working of *any* system of constitutional government, whether one on the lines of the Act of 1935 or based on some alternative principles. These dangers, rising both out of India's past history and out of present fundamental maladjustments in its society, might in certain circumstances cause a tension similar to that which in so many European countries in the past decade has destroyed systems of government which were based on restraint, convention, and law, and they will be the underlying cause of much in the political life which will seem otherwise obscure.

One of these dangers, the communal conflict, has already been discussed. This causes the most immediate anxiety, but in the future others are likely to be scarcely less troublesome. If they are to be provided against they need to be studied with the utmost attention. For all those who have to do with Indian affairs in the next period there must be drawn a kind of political map charting the reefs, stating the strength of the various currents,

showing from which quarters are likely to blow the hardest winds. Opinion will certainly vary as to the details to be noticed in such a map, so much needing to be based on the evidence, often unexpected and perplexing, of the years since the passing of the Act. Yet probably most observers will find that their eye is caught by four principal features besides the communal perils. One is the growth of separatist sentiment in various parts of the country. Another the ferment among the masses. The third is the psychological idiosyncrasies of the people. The fourth the trend of political speculation.

2

The first of these dangers to political tranquillity is that the political unity of India is threatened not only by communal but also by ethnological divisions. There is a weakness in what Burke called the "internal holdings" of society. India is paying for the failure in the past to weld together its peoples.[1] These have remained as a congeries of nearly a dozen principal nations, each speaking a different language, each with literary traditions of some distinction, each with memories of political independence and military glory.[2] It must never be forgotten that for a correct view it is necessary to think of India less as a country than as a continent. It is true that under the British Raj it seemed for the moment that India had progressed and had entered on a new phase, in that the menace of disruption so constant in its past history had

[1] Until the British Raj there was no 'India'. It was quite uncertain what territories it should include. If the attempt in the nineteenth century to conquer Afghanistan had been successful, that country would now be a part of 'India'. Indeed there is a closer resemblance between the Afghans and the peoples of North India than between those and Bengalis and Madrasis.

[2] These do not correspond with the provinces of British India. The provinces are for the most part artificial units whose frontiers cut across the 'natural' units. For many years one of the sub-plots of Indian politics has been the demand for the fresh demarcation of provincial boundaries, the divisions to be made on ethnological lines.

been exorcised. That most formidable barrier to national unity — a diversity of tongues — was being broken down by the growing use of the English language, at least among the educated classes. But this period ended with the political awakening, and, as the All-India nationalist movement spread, so ironically enough did the dead subordinate nations spring back to life.

In retrospect it can indeed be seen that it could hardly have happened otherwise. A political excitement such as prevails in India is like a wind which stirs to life all ancient feuds and devotions. For such consequences there are many parallels in other parts of the world. Perhaps the nearest is the re-emergence in the nineteenth century of the ancient nationalities of central and eastern Europe : though there the situation was even more complicated than in India since the area was divided between two Empires — the Habsburg and the Ottoman — one of which was disintegrating more rapidly than the other.

To recognise that there has been in India a revival of these local patriotisms is not to deny that there is a substantial class which has remained quite unaffected by them, and whose outlook is still that of All-India nationalism. This class embraces members of every national group — Tamils and Punjabis, Kanarese and Pathans, Sikhs, Bengalis, Sindhis, and Oriyas, representatives of every race in India. Yet they are only representatives and the peoples themselves have not coalesced. Indeed the division is growing much wider.

This trend has been strengthened by the Act of 1935. The best guarantee for a united India is a strong central government, and the outstanding feature at present is its weakness. The Act, by transferring permanently many of the powers of the centre to the provinces, led to a weakening of the central authority, and this has been aggravated by the delay in bringing into being the new federal organ. It was inevitable that the old bureaucratic government, knowing that it was shortly to be superseded, should develop a certain listlessness, and should be con-

tent with holding the fort in a somewhat perfunctory manner until its successor was ready to take over. With the weight of the Central Government on the provinces thus lightened, the conditions have been favourable for the spread of parochial feeling.[1]

The growth has indeed been rapid and almost jungle-like. The proposal for the creation of Pakistan is the most sinister threat of partition but is not the only one. Marathas object to being governed by Gujarati ministers; an Andhra province seeks to be born. The South discovers that its civilisation is profoundly different from that of the North and demands that Northern interference shall be reduced to a minimum. Even the newer geographical units, which have no historical tradition and were created solely for administrative convenience, join in the demand for autonomy. Between the provinces there is an outburst of economic nationalism, and the natives of one province find increasing difficulty in obtaining employment in another. That this exuberance has its good side and results from the feeling of blood flowing once again through the political veins of the country should not be ignored; nevertheless it is a real and pressing threat to the unity of India.

It may be possible to exaggerate the dangers of disruption, and it can be argued that the development of an all-enfolding economic life and the perfecting of communications have removed the possibility of a break-up of India. Yet the bonds which in the last resort hold the country together are a civil service, many of the higher posts of which are still held by Englishmen, an army similarly officered, and the British language. If these bonds were severed it is hard to see any reason why the history of the eighteenth century, or of early periods when the empire was in disruption, should not repeat itself.

[1] In recent months the war has, it is true, reversed this tendency, Parliament having as an emergency measure put into the hands of the Central Government all or more than all the powers of control over the provinces which it enjoyed in the past.

During the British rule the forces of disunity have been repressed, not eliminated; they have been like a jack-in-a-box, held down by the superior British power but ready to spring forth again as soon as that power was relaxed. Indeed the student in India can hardly fail to notice that behind all the appearance of modernity in political life its pattern and motive is in some respects not very different from that of the latter days of the Moghul Empire. The theme then was the struggle for political power between the Moslems of the North in alliance with their satellite Rajput princes against militant Hinduism represented by the Maratha confederacy; and in the South the great Moslem state of Hyderabad, powerful yet isolated from the Moslems of the North, waited uneasily the result of the conflict. How essentially similar is the motive to-day. It is true that the old contestants are in new garb, boast political philosophies undreamed-of in the eighteenth century, and for the most part have abandoned dynastic ideas. But like the Moghul Empire the Moslem League fights to maintain Moslem civilisation paramount in the North; like the Moghuls it finds its natural allies in a faction of Rajput princes; the thrust and drive of militant Hinduism comes, and is likely to come in increasing measure, from Maharastra; Hyderabad, as in the eighteenth century, while seeking to extend its role, is full of foreboding.

3

Perhaps an even more potent danger than from these ghosts from the past is that which comes from the present ferment among the masses. Their political awakening, their consciousness of very real grievances, and their determination that these should be redressed are very likely during the next half-century to interrupt the smooth course of political life. The threat comes partly from urban labour, but to a much greater extent from the rural masses.

In Western countries the grand cause of social upheaval

has been urban labour. But in India, though factory labour is bound to become vociferous with the increased industrial development, it has not at present, nor is likely to have in the near future, the same weight as in Europe. The Indian labour movement

> Has nature that in time will venom breed,
> No teeth for the present.

Its numbers are too small for effective action either by constitutional or revolutionary means. In the entire country the number of workers in registered factories was in 1938 less than one and three-quarter millions ; not all of these are enfranchised. The number of special seats for labour in the provincial legislatures is thirty-eight. Labour candidates obtain little backing outside the industrial areas, and a labour party is unlikely for a very long time to dominate the provincial or central legislatures ; and the weakness of the movement is intensified by its failure to develop a strong and united trade unionism, whether for industrial or political purposes. This is not to deny that in spite of labour's electoral weakness some provincial governments have shown themselves very sensitive to threats of disturbances in the factories, and have allowed themselves to be pressed further than political considerations would seem to make necessary. But in the last resort labour, so far as constitutional action is concerned, is impotent : like a gadfly it may sting governments into foolish action, but it cannot effectively control or menace them.

If labour has little chance of coming to power by lawful means its chances of success by revolution are equally small, its numerical weakness being again too great a handicap. Only if through prolonged war the framework of government was weakened and the loyalty of the army undermined would it find a situation which it could manipulate. There is perhaps a parallel between the position of urban labour in India to-day and in Tsarist Russia. Russian labour, though full of revolutionary

fervour, was powerless so long as the army remained intact, and the insurrection of 1905 failed for this reason. But in 1917 the army had disintegrated, and labour, though the barest fraction of the total population, was the best organised force at the vital centres of the Russian polity. Thus in co-operation with mutinous soldiers it was able to seize these without difficulty. Failing such untoward events the threat of labour revolution in India is not very formidable. Perhaps at present the main political role of labour is that, being a very mobile force whose members are accustomed to spend a part of the year in the villages and to return permanently to the country after a spell in the factories, it acts as a kind of channel by means of which urban and revolutionary ideas flow into the countryside ; and in this respect the situation again resembles very closely that of pre-revolutionary Russia.

A much more serious threat to Indian society comes from political action of the rural masses.

The condition of the Indian peasantry has in recent years been thoroughly examined, and the public is almost wearisomely familiar with the picture which has been presented. The great majority of the Indian population are peasants on a standard of living little above subsistence level. Their life is hard. Nevertheless it is at a level both of material prosperity and tranquil security unknown in the past history of India and superior to that of China or any part of Asia which remained under indigenous government.

The relatively advanced position of the Indian farmer means, however, that he is more, not less, politically restive than peasantry elsewhere. His grievances may be less than those of the farmers of other Asiatic countries but he resents them more ; or rather he is in a position, which they are not, to seek their redress. The British administration has been a shelter under which class after class has advanced in prosperity, awakened politically, enunciated a programme, organised itself. The peasantry, though its appearance on the political map was delayed

longer than that of other classes, has now arrived, and this event is of momentous consequence. Of the agents of change in India few are likely to be so potent as the agitator who goes to the peasantry ; the newspaper which is passed from village to village and read aloud at the nightly gathering of farmers ; and the motor-bus, carrying the town to the country and the country to the town, usually a battered and undistinguished vehicle yet the most portentous of all the new things which have appeared in the Indian countryside.

How is this political awakening likely to be translated into the concrete terms of political life ? In the past three years there have been sporadic acts of peasant lawlessness, and by some these have been compared to the burning of the châteaux in the French Revolution and taken to signify the beginning of a peasant uprising. Yet the weight of peasant action is likely to be felt less in such turbulent outbreaks than in its effects on the provincial legislatures and the parties. Unlike the farmer in the neighbouring country of China, the Indian abhors violence even though he may be in desperate condition, and one of the features which distinguishes Indian from Chinese (or Russian) history is the absence of the periodical jacquerie.[1] Fortunately the farmer has up to the present shown no very significant sign of departing from this tradition. Nor indeed is there reason for him to run his head against the government, since the new system of government gives him the possibility of making himself by legitimate and constitutional means the master of it. The Act of 1935 enfranchised 36 million people, the great majority of whom live in the villages ; and the expectation is that the suffrage will be progressively widened, thus increasing the proportion of the peasantry to the total enfranchised population. The farmer, though he is not

[1] The very high murder rate in many provinces, and the astonishing triviality of the motives which cause the most brutal violence, do not, however, hold out the hope of an unimpassioned political conduct among the masses.

yet conscious of it, has been made the master of India.

It is worth while speculating on the probable effects of this extension of the franchise, which was one of the most radical parts of the Act of 1935, but whose significance has been strangely little noticed. It is a measure which can hardly fail to change drastically the tone of Indian politics. Under a government which is both authoritarian and efficiently equipped with instruments for maintaining obedience, agrarian distress even though acute may only slightly disturb the political life. Whatever the straits to which the peasant is brought he cannot translate his discontent into political action except through sporadic rioting, and this is easily suppressed by a government in command of a loyal army and police as well as an adequate system of communications. But the situation changes radically with the introduction of responsible parliamentary government. Where the peasantry are a majority of the electorate, agrarian questions become the chief issue of politics, and agrarian crises are reflected in the triumph of parties pledged to extremism.

Consider in conjunction with this change the educational standards of the Indian peasantry. Except in a few areas where intensive education has been carried out, it is rare to find in the villages any who know the name of the capital of India or of the main countries of the world. Some of the younger men have been made alive to world affairs by the newspaper and the cinema, and their number is growing ; but compared to the total population they are a minority. It is true that all have heard of Mr. Gandhi ; but in their minds, still dominated by the standards of the past, Mr. Gandhi is of interest not as a politician but as a holy man, the last of the long line of Hindu ascetics. If on election day they use their vote as he recommends, it is because in the Hindu manner they revere him as a saint and follow him in all practicable things, not because they are attached to the policies for which he stands : to-morrow, at the dictation of whoever succeeds Mr. Gandhi in his hold over their imagination,

they may vote for a line exactly opposite. There is an illuminating report by the reforms commissioner of Bengal relating how peasants left the polling booths disconsolate because they could not vote for God, the collector, or the King-Emperor. It is said that in Madras the recording of a vote has been dignified into a form of ' puja ' with a suitable ritual, and the fact that the Congress election colour was the yellow sacred to the Hindus is believed to have swayed thousands of votes. This is the sovereign people to whom parliamentary institutions have been presented ; the transaction suggests the gift of a powerful and complex engine to a child. This is not to deny that the Indian peasantry have great natural intelligence, shrewd ideas of justice, and views upon the policy which they would like to see the government pursue. Herein indeed lies the danger. To a party which offers the abolition of landlordism, reduction of taxes, and a writing-off of debt, they will give an attentive ear. In a party which offers no more than strict adherence to liberal principle they are less interested. Farmers in desperate want understand little and care less about the refinements of a parliamentary system, its moderation, its delays, its need for compromise. They are the friends of direct action, and it is not difficult to foresee the consequences to parliamentary institutions if in a time of acute distress the legislatures were swamped by their nominees. It is true that the federal form of government affords a certain guarantee against agrarian revolution on a nation-wide scale ; yet a general breakdown of parliamentary government in the provinces could not but result in the gravest embarrassment at the centre also.[1]

[1] How little the peasant understands the political situation is perhaps shown by the fact that in parts of the United Provinces he refers to the British as ' the Moslems ' — he is unaware that the Moghul Empire has ceased to be. It is true that he has been taught to shout political slogans — but so had the Russian soldiers in the rising of 1828 who, crying for " Constantine and Constitution ", were under the impression that Constitution was the wife of Constantine. Due to the revolution in communications the peasant is rapidly acquiring political knowledge and interests — but is he likely to be a Liberal ?

The danger of peasant radicalism will be the greater if India should in future experience economic troubles which cause acute agrarian distress. And unhappily the economic future of the peasantry is full of hazards and uncertainty. With the growing complexity of the economic system the Indian peasant is increasingly sensitive to the ups and downs of world prosperity. Moreover, there are reasons to think that, serious as may be the consequences to the Indian farmer of the world cyclical fluctuation in economic welfare, still graver may be the effects to him of a domestic crisis on which India seems to be entering. This is not the place to discuss India's economic prospects. But speaking very broadly it may be said that the main difficulties will arise from the pressure on the soil resulting from the growth of population.[1] There are already signs — noticed, for example, in the Census Report of 1931 — that the class of entirely landless labourers is growing with alarming rapidity.

These signs of the times have not escaped notice among Indian politicians. One of the most significant events of recent years has been the organisation by younger politicians of Kisan Sabhas or Peasant Councils. These

[1] Admittedly there is much controversy about the nature of India's economic prospects, and some forecasts are unnecessarily gloomy. The argument is between Malthusians, who see in the growth of population the root of all human ill and who are confidently resigned to the imminent appearance in India of the Malthusian checks, civil war, famine, and pestilence, and a less doctrinaire school which points out that while the population has risen so also has the standard of living, and suggests that the apparent superfluity can be accommodated by the taking in of new land, the intensive increase of productivity, and the spread of new occupations. Yet nobody would say that India's capacity to absorb population is unlimited ; in every country there is an optimum size of population (having regard to its resources and to the prevailing level of ability to exploit them), and the Indian population must be approaching, if it has not already exceeded, this optimum. Whether after the fairly steady rise in economic prosperity during the past century a decline has not already set in is one of the most debated questions of the day, a question almost impossible to answer because of the confusion of Indian statistics. That a decline must come sooner or later if the population continues to increase at the present rate cannot be doubted. There is little cultivable land still to be taken up ; and industrialisation, even if pushed as a main feature of national policy, can absorb but a fraction of the annual increase of five million heads.

are cells of radicalism. If they have not yet emerged from obscurity they are none the less formidable. A virus is never very noticeable. Given twenty years of agitation and the rise of a gifted leader, and the Kisan Sabhas may not inconceivably have eclipsed both Congress and Moslem League.

There are of course breakwaters against the radical torrents. In many provinces the peasant is still subservient to the minor police official, the local money-lender, and the caste or faction leader ; he is still exceedingly ignorant; his political ideas are still hazy ; his wants are few ; and he feels instinctively that property is sacred, even though the distribution of property may be grossly uneven. In other words the peasant is still to some extent in the condition described by Mr. Montague as " pathetic contentment ". Moreover, in many parts of the country (especially in Madras, Bombay, and the Punjab) the prevailing form of land-tenure is peasant proprietorship, and the mind of the rural population is therefore not exacerbated by that red rag of the Oriental peasantry, the exploiting landlord. Finally, in some provinces it is likely to be some years before the Hindu part of the sovereign people frees itself entirely from its awe of the Brahman, and the hold of that caste upon political institutions and the essentially middle-class outlook in government which it implies will not in the meanwhile be seriously shaken. But these are the circumstances only of parts of the country. In other parts either they do not exist or they exist in much weaker form ; especially in those parts of the North in which the landlord system prevails the political awakening of the peasantry is a reality ; and as war has always been the great breeder of political ferment so is the present struggle, even though not touching India very closely, likely to intensify and accelerate the process.

There is the likelihood, moreover, that the agrarian problem will become linked with the caste problem. It must always be kept in mind that at the base of rural life

there are sixty million untouchables whose grievances, though still patiently borne, will seem more and more intolerable as education and the new spirit spreads throughout the countryside. As yet the institution of untouchability is still hardy. If among political leaders it has become fashionable to stage spectacular fraternisation of Brahmans and pariahs the barrier remains in the villages.[1] Nor is it likely to be set aside by mere legislation. Whatever the laws which the governments may pass the higher castes will find ways to circumvent them ; and the untouchables will continue to be denied the use of wells, their children will be segregated in the schools, they will be made in countless ways to feel their place, and their social inferiority and their lack of education will be turned to account by the higher castes for their economic exploitation. Yet an institution so archaic, so monstrous, and causing so much humiliation can hardly survive the changes now taking place in India. As the political ferment spreads the bitterness excited by these wrongs will find political expression. The political organisation of the untouchables has already begun in the neighbourhood of Bombay ; and though the movement is as yet of little influence in national politics and though many of the members of the community who enter public life are awed into respectful submission to the high-caste leaders, it is bound to spread and may be the beginning of much turmoil.

4

The third of the dangers has to do with the imponderables of national psychology.

Disraeli once said : " A political institution is a machine ; the motive power is the national character. With that it rests whether the machine will benefit society

[1] The Brahmans often purify themselves afterwards. The decline of certain caste taboos does not mean the end of caste. Thus it has become fashionable to dine with untouchables in restaurants (or coffee-houses as they are termed in South India) but not to invite them to dinner in one's own house. A new convention has succeeded the old.

or destroy it." This goes to the heart of the matter. A people with a flair for politics will in the long run evolve a tolerable system of government. Where men get on well together in private life, have the knack of conciliation, are public-spirited and at the same time business-like, are not easily carried away by emotion and are not given to putting logic before common sense, the system of government which prevails will tend, whatever the institutional form in which it is embodied, to be a liberal one. Where this rare combination of qualities is lacking, government cannot help but take on a harsher appearance. Is the character of the mass of the Indian people such as to make more likely or less likely a tranquil political development? Does it lend itself to a liberal form of government?

To seek to describe the psychology of a people, especially of a people so diverse as the Indian, is no easy matter, and involves unfairness to many individuals and even classes whose traditions set them apart from the mass. But the traveller cannot fail to notice that a certain type of mind and certain qualities are so common that they are bound to reflect themselves in political life. The difficulty is to define them. It is from the thousand chance impressions, the striking anecdote, the revealing remark thrown out inconsequently in the midst of conversation, the sudden and unexpected singularity of behaviour, that the observer derives ultimately his most valuable knowledge. But to convey his intuitions in a precise form, and to make a clear picture out of what is more a matter of feeling than of vision, is a task requiring the art and scope of a novelist rather than that of a student of politics.

Modern psychology stresses the importance of the early upbringing in moulding the character of the grown man, and perhaps the best way towards a more sympathetic comprehension of the Indian mind is to study the Indian home. The child grows up in an atmosphere which is kindly, indulgent, and humane. At a much earlier age than is usual in the West it begins to share the life of the adult members of the family. Girls begin very young to

take their share of domestic work and are taught that their place is the home. In comparison boys are favoured and petted. Often they are more industrious, less pugnacious, and more docile than Western boys ; they are also less subject to discipline, and sometimes this has a lasting effect on their life. In their more formal education there is an unfortunate tradition of cultivating the memory rather than the reasoning power. As they grow up there become fixed in their minds ideas and habits which never enter the life of Western boys. If they are Hindus they are aware that they belong to a caste ; they regard alien castes or alien communities as strangers, and often as unclean ; they are obsessed by taboos with regard to food and general social conduct. Whether Hindu or Moslem they have a conception of family altogether different from that in the West. Whenever the judgment or interest of the individual conflicts with those of the family, it is held that the family should prevail.

If there is much charm in the family life there is also much distraction. The Indian who has prospered in life is expected to provide for and accommodate his connections, extending even to third cousins ; and thus it is not uncommon to find twenty or more persons residing in a comparatively small house. That they adapt themselves to one another as well as they do, and that there is not more family strife, is a tribute to the forbearance and tolerance of the Indian character. But it cannot be denied that the environment is an unfavourable one for intellectual exertion. There is little privacy ; if any member of the household seeks this, it is set down against him as a mark of surliness, pride, or incipient sickness. Partly as the result of overcrowding there is apt to be a constant commotion and air of coming and going ; the atmosphere in the average middle-class house is often that of a railway waiting-room, and in well-to-do houses, of a sumptuous but not very efficient hotel. In many families there seems to be no ordered and regular timetable. There appears to be no set hour for getting up,

for taking meals, or for going to bed ; people prefer to do as the spirit moves them ; and the general confusion is increased by the fact that the women of the household seldom eat with the men, and that meals are being served to different members of the family throughout the day. The Indian family is so closely knit that it is perhaps unnecessary to lament the absence of the commensal tie, the chief link in the life of the Western family, but it can hardly be denied that Indians lose some of the pleasure of life by neglecting to make of their meals a cheerful and convivial occasion.

The way of life differs of course from class to class and in different parts of the country, and it is possible that among the peasantry, at least in the classes above the level of the sweepers and untouchables, the daily round is more systematic and orderly than among the well-to-do.

The Indian peoples have such compelling personal charm and so many amiable qualities — their hospitality, their warm and affectionate response to friendship which is sincerely offered, their devotion to children — that it is distasteful to anatomise their character from the cold-blooded point of view of how they will act as political beings. Yet this study cannot be shirked. It must be asked whether this gifted and kindly people who possess so many virtues which adorn private life have also the sterner ones which are serviceable for public and political affairs.

Certainly there is much to be put on the credit side of the account. The Indian character has many qualities which make for the smooth progress of public life — an instinctive peaceableness, a disposition to settle disputes by compromise, a marked distaste for persecution and dragonnades. Other qualities, less estimable in themselves, at least make for conservatism. Among these are the veneration for property, the deep conviction (born of caste) of human inequality and the necessity of a class system, the other-worldliness, and the scrupulous observance of taboos. All these are signs which suggest a lasting

tranquillity. Yet some of the items on the debit side are formidable.

In common with other Oriental peoples Indians seem to find unusual difficulty in social co-operation, at least in any enterprise which extends beyond the village. It is perhaps an ungracious observation of a visitor, but nobody who has attended an Indian function, whether business, social, or political, can escape the impression that Indians find an almost fantastic difficulty in acting together, in handling masses, and in co-operating with one another. Such institutions as are almost entirely in Indian hands — for example, universities and schools — can scarcely be regarded as models, but are in fact full of confusion and intrigue. What is the cause of this it is not easy to say. Perhaps the very individualism of the Indian from which so much of his charm proceeds impairs his power of co-operation. His susceptibilities are unusually acute ; and a constant impediment to every kind of enterprise is that some of those engaged, either feeling themselves slighted or because their viewpoint has not been *in toto* accepted, are likely at some stage to withdraw, or, in the local terminology, to stage a walk-out. This happens in politics, in business, in academic and social institutions. It is, incidentally, a custom also met with in China.

It would be tedious and impertinent to enquire too closely into various other failings. The exaggerated devotion to the family ; the unwillingness to face realities ; the natural amiability which often results in answering questions in the way thought likely to please the questioner than according to the truth, and likewise in an inability to say ' No ' to a petitioner, even when the public weal most requires it ; the tendency for the national quickness of mind to be canalised into barren intrigue — have often been commented upon. The mania for writing anonymous letters is at once the plague of the country and a symbol of querulous ineffectiveness. In spite of all its many virtues the Indian mind has often shown itself too volatile, too sensitive to atmosphere, too impulsive to

stand well the wear and tear of great affairs. Nor, whatever Mr. Gandhi may say, and however India may resent the unfeeling candour of over-critical Englishmen, can it be pretended that there is as yet a full appreciation of the importance of exactness of statement ; and this seems to result at least in part from the indifference of parents to the habits of their children in looking at truth 'askance and strangely'.

There are other features of Indian life which can hardly escape notice. No picture would be accurate which did not give a prominent place to the astrologer, and it is well to remember that few decisions are made, whether of the most trivial or vital kind, into which considerations of fortune-telling do not enter. It is true that a foreign observer in England might draw from the popular Sunday newspapers a rather similar impression of the habits of the English, but what gives a singularity to India is that the astrologer is consulted by all classes, by the best educated as well as by the masses. It seems that a marriage rarely takes place unless the horoscopes of bride and bridegroom have been found to be in harmony : in Indian states the marching orders of regiments have sometimes to be changed so as to coincide with an auspicious day : surgeons are not infrequently requested to conduct operations at peculiar times, as for example in the early hours of the morning, if the stars show this to be a lucky time : in many newspapers the announcements of astrologers form no small part of the revenue from advertising, and a Bombay fortune-teller publishes that he is consulted by leading members of the Congress working committee, whom he names and who therefore presumably do not object to this revelation. It may perhaps be argued that this addiction is a harmless foible and signifies no more than does the reluctance of some Englishmen to walk under a ladder ; and Indians sometimes point out that the Moghul and the great Chinese emperors, Queen Elizabeth, Herr Hitler (as it is believed), and countless others have had astrologers about them and have

prospered. Yet those who must take the responsibility of transferring power to Indian hands would be happier if they were sure that in its exercise necromancy would play a minor part.

Many of these shortcomings may appear sufficiently harmless, and, if the cause of vexation in day-to-day life, to have little to do with larger questions of statecraft. But a people which is perplexed in managing smoothly its minor affairs is likely to shipwreck when engaged on greater undertakings.

The success of democratic government in Great Britain and the United States is due to the carrying over into public life of the virtues usually exhibited in miniature in domestic and local affairs. The essence of democracy is the ability of a people to organise themselves voluntarily, and where this is lacking compulsion may be necessary. This is already felt by many Indians and a train of thought commonly met with is: 'Our people are impossible. We are too individualist. We need discipline. We need dictatorship.' Out of despair at the difficulty of persuading an illiterate and inexperienced population to revolutionise their lives of their own free will, the Indian democrat slides almost unconsciously into sympathy with the methods of Germany and Russia.

The tendency is all the stronger because in spite of their apparent acceptance of Western ideas most Indians have deep in their bones an awe of government which is hard to reconcile with a liberal system. Few things surprise the visitor more than the almost god-like prestige of whoever has anything to do with the government, even though it may be in a subordinate and almost menial capacity. At the back of the mind of most Indians, even of those who under the British system have made it their life business to denounce the administration, there is an instinctive belief that government is on a higher plane than mortals, and that criticism of it, or attempt to control it, is in some ways *lèse-majesté*. The result is that when Indians who have been formerly in opposition come to

power they often shed with astonishing quickness the liberal views they expressed in opposition and act like the most hardened autocrats. This is noticeable with some politicians from British India who have become dewans in the states ; and still more surprising was the way in which Congress ministries in certain (but not all) provinces upheld the dignity of government and showed an almost ruthless indifference to criticism. It has been said that to scratch an Englishman in the bureaucratic I.C.S. is to find a democrat, but to scratch an Indian liberal is to find a born bureaucrat. An Indian government, however liberal in intellect, may all too easily find itself drifting towards dictatorship ; descent to Avernus is instinctive.

Finally there is the current trend of political thought. People in England are too little aware of the extent to which a reaction has set in against liberal ideas. The older generation still expresses liberal sentiments, India rather than England having in fact become the custodian of the Victorian tradition ; and in a paper such as the *Leader* at Allahabad, Mill and Gladstone are quoted a hundred times for once that they appear in the London press. Yet even the older generation has misgivings. Having declared its undying fidelity to the purest form of democracy, it adds that India is facing peculiar problems ; it points out that the Hindu-Moslem tension is upsetting calculations ; it wonders whether the German or Russian form of government is not the up-to-date and dynamic one ; it notes that issues which under parliamentary government must be compromised can under authoritarian rule be solved — and it wonders whether democracy may not be an ideal for the twenty-first rather than for the twentieth century.

It is, however, among the younger generation that is to be found the trend of thought which gives most serious concern with regard to the future. For the past decade

or more the environment in which the youth of the middle class has grown up has been anything but satisfactory. Modern India, like the Weimar Republic in Germany, has made the mistake of opening its universities to numbers greatly in excess of those which can hope to attain a position in life such as graduates in other countries may reasonably expect. Thus there has come into being a class which is vigorous, unemployed, and aware that it is without prospects. Not unnaturally it is radical and revolutionary. Such conditions were ideal for the agitation of the radical parties ; and how great a disservice has been done by them may one day be all too vividly realised.

What are the positive ideas of the student it is hard to say. He is full of diffuse mistrust but is extremely gullible. He is the very antithesis of long-headed, and has a curious inability to understand that a fact is any different from a wish or a suspicion. Often it can hardly be said that he has opinions, for he prefers to surrender his intelligence to the agitator, and to base his politics upon intuition rather than reason. His explanations are apt to be incoherent.

> He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
> But can't restate the matter; that's my boast.
> Others could reason it out to you, and prove
> Things they have made me feel.

This mood finds its most characteristic expression in vivid destructive action undertaken for its own sake ; and not unnaturally a considerable section have looked for salvation to Russia (though the conduct of that country has in the past two years damped their enthusiasm). How the Indian youth envisages the Russian system or wherein the attraction chiefly lies it is hard to say. Probably it is in the promise of a dynamic society so different from the sluggish and stagnant society which he fancies that he sees around him and which he detests, but of which he feels himself the powerless prisoner. He pictures the Soviet world as one from which low motives have been

exorcised, in which all are engaged in a fraternal endeavour to raise the standard of living, and in which all the inhibitions, traditions, and constrictions of the Hindu system are miraculously ended, without the troublesome need for the individual to emancipate himself by his own exertions.

It is of course possible to take too tragic a view of the eccentricities of thought of young men, even in a society such as that of India where the younger generation has come to play a disproportionate part in political life; and the views of the student seldom fail to undergo a sobering change when he leaves the university. Yet in spite of this reservation it must be said that the prevailing temper is unhealthy, ominous, full of danger, and recalls too nearly that of other countries in the periods which have preceded great upheavals. In 1753, after a visit to Paris, Lord Chesterfield wrote: "In short, all the symptoms which I have ever met with in history, previous to great changes and revolutions in government, exist and daily increase in France"; and a rather similar observation forms itself in the mind of the visitor to contemporary India. A gradual disappearance of the veneration for the established organs of state; an indifference to, or even a contempt for, the governing authority, and a conviction that it is effete, doomed, lacking in moral basis, and a kind of phantom;[1] a sense of impending change, and a subtle but pervading belief that an era is nearing its close and all things are to be made new; a questioning of principle and a weakening of the ideas of right and wrong; a cynicism and levity combined with an often crude enthusiasm for particular objects: these are not safe or reassuring signs in a political society. In spite of the Congress doctrine of non-violence it has come to be accepted as an axiom

[1] "Hence horrible shadow, unreal mockery, hence." This is the attitude of the Indian intelligentsia to the apparatus of Governor-General, secretariat, assemblies, and provincial ministries. It is partly a result of Mr. Gandhi's preaching of the 'simple life'.

that the way of political progress is not by evolution but by clash and combat ; and the younger generation looks forward to upheaval, if not with eagerness, at least with a resigned fatalism as towards an event which it is beyond human power to avoid. When it is remembered how curiously similar was the position and mood of German youth during the economic depression, and to what extent Herr Hitler based upon them his rise to power, it is impossible not to feel concern about their contribution to events.

Writing of the prelude to the French Revolution, Carlyle said:

> Without the Earth-rind of habit, call it system of habits, in a word, fixed ways of acting and believing, society would not exist at all. With such it exists for better or worse. . . . Let but, by ill chance, the thin Earth-rind be once broken. The foundation of the great deep boils forth. The Earth-rind is shattered, instead of a green flowery world there is a waste wild weltering chaos ; — which has again, with tumult and struggle, to make itself into a world.

The problem in India is to remake its political system without letting loose one of these fiery outbreaks. But the Earth-rind is dangerously thin.

CHAPTER TWELVE

INDIA AND CHINA

I

SUCH would appear to be the dangers of which Indian statesmen must beware. These are the reefs and these the currents which may mean shipwreck.

Recently some Indian statesmen have shown an interest in the voyage of another ship — as Oriental in its structure as India itself — which has been sailing dangerous waters and which, after it had time and again been given up for lost, is now being navigated with surprising skill. This is China. The resistance of China to Japan, and its recovery after the horrors of its civil war, make in India a deepening impression. India in the past was strangely insensitive to Chinese civilisation, but to-day this is changed and the East seeks for light from the Further East. In recent speeches Mr. Nehru and Mr. Rajagopalachari have set before their countrymen the ideal of a close Oriental partnership between them and the Chinese. Their argument seems to be that as China is an Asiatic and agrarian country, and that as in the past hundred years it has been subjected to something of the same ordeal as India and now seems to be victoriously emerging from it, China and not the West is the model for India to follow.

This interest is likely to increase rather than diminish. Nor can it do anything but good. For even if China with its sufferings and tribulations may seem a peculiar model on which a country should base itself, and may in certain respects appear rather as a dread warning than as an inspiration, yet a widening horizon of Indian politics is certainly welcome. But if China's experience is to be turned to account by India it is of great importance that it should be properly interpreted. Only if in the past the

history and circumstances of China and India have been on broadly similar lines will the experience of China, for all its being an Asiatic power, prove really any more relevant to India than that of the West. Otherwise the similarity of their present state may be superficial, and if allowed to influence actual aims and policy may be actually misleading.

These reasons may perhaps justify a brief historical retrospect of the civilisations of India and China.

2

The basic conditions of Indian and Chinese civilisation are certainly not unlike. Both are agrarian countries, both have vast populations. Both include peoples different in race, temperament, and even in language. In the life of their peasantry there is a common primitive element which is characterised by the worship of godlings, the sense of surrounding demons who must be propitiated, the fear that the earth will lose fertility or the spring neglect to return, and the almost panic concern to maintain the size of the population.

This does not mean that the two civilisations have developed in the same way. In human life two brothers may be born with dispositions in common, but nevertheless develop different sides of their characters under the influence of different stimuli and a different environment. So it seems to have been with China and India.

We are struck immediately by the difference in the political history of the two countries. In India we saw that before the modern period the country had never achieved political unity but like modern Europe had contained many separate states. Sometimes these were bound together by a victorious emperor but empires were never permanent and after a time collapsed. China on the other hand has for more than two thousand years been the outstanding instance of a great unified empire. This is not to deny that strong provincial feeling has always

existed in China, nor to overlook the communal problems, in some regions causing almost as much bitterness as is found in India. But while these fissiparous forces existed the tendencies opposed to them were yet stronger. The common script, common philosophy, common customs and outlook, proved one of the strongest political cements in human history.

It has not been always thus, and China was not born in this happy condition. At the dawn of its recorded history its polity appears indeed to have been very much like that of India. It was divided between a multitude of petty states which for centuries engaged in almost unceasing warfare, and a nominal emperor saw his power confined to as small a space as that of the Moghuls in their days of decadence. But in the third century B.C. occurred the great miracle of Chinese history. Two successive dynasties spread their power over the greater part of the country, and, what was of more consequence, welded the peoples under their sway into such a unified mass that ever since then their instinct for unity has been such as to survive the lapses into anarchy which were periodically brought on by agrarian crises or by the fall of the ruling family. This transformation occurred in China. Why was no similar revolution wrought in India? It is hard to discover. The Gupta Empire in India might well have played the same part as the Chin, Han and Tang in China. But in fact not until the coming of the British did India achieve a comparable unity, and whether even now it is a permanent unity no man can say. A deeper understanding of the causes of these different histories might throw much light on India's present problem.

3

Not only did the Chinese state differ from that of India in its unity: the organisation of government was also different. With rare exceptions the administration in India, whether under Hindu or Moslem kings, was

military in character. It is true that it reposed on an elaborate fiscal system and that this could only be maintained by an extensive and more or less well-organised bureaucracy. In certain illustrious periods of Indian history, for example under the Emperor Akbar, this civilian side of the administration was impressive in its efficiency. But the ancient civil service of India — about which surprisingly little is known — had certainly never the power of the Chinese corps of mandarins, the extraordinary organisation which was the real master of China.

This pecular body is indeed perhaps the central wonder of Chinese civilisation, far more impressive than the Grand Canal or the Tartar Wall. In the period when the old feudal organisation was collapsing and the imperial power was becoming supreme, the emperors turned for the administration of their dominions not to the military nor to the descendants of the feudal class but to the scholars and teachers, a class which from early times had enjoyed great prestige. These, once admitted into the government, organised themselves into a kind of corporation, the members of which were recruited by examination in the literary classics ; and the result was to make paramount in the state not wealth, nor birth, nor military ability, nor courtliness, but intellect, and moreover the special type of intellect which is predominantly literary. Thus China became the classic example in human history of the entrusting of government to philosophers or learned men.

The Chinese Civil Service attained an almost impregnable position in political and social life. At first it had in parts of the country to compete with the old feudal type of administration : but presently this became extinct. Thenceforward the mandarins held all the key offices. Fortified by the immense prestige of the Confucian culture of which they were themselves the most distinguished exponents ; guided by ideas which were acceptable to the bulk of the Chinese people and which resulted in a system of government humane, conservative, easy-going, and enlightened ; sustained by traditions and training

which were the result of experience in public affairs extending over many centuries, they held their position almost without challenge. Popular tumult, the aspirations of a merchant class, the impatience of the military, never availed to shake their authority. They survived even the Tartar and Manchu conquests, for as the custodians of the machine of government they were no less useful or even indispensable to a barbarian emperor than to a Chinese-born Son of Heaven.

It is not easy to say why China developed this complex system of government while India, which might have profited so much from similar institutions, was content with the simpler system we have already described. Probably the explanation must be sought less in material circumstance than in the incalculable movements of the human mind and will. But it is worth while noticing a theory which has recently become fashionable. This starts from the fact, not always appreciated, that Chinese civilisation — its institutions, ideas, and economy — are most intimately linked with, or indeed have almost been created by, the very extensive water engineering undertakings of the government. It has been said that the population of China is as dependent upon water as our own people upon iron and coal. The very appearance of the country has been transformed. "The look of the ancient Chinese country is difficult enough to imagine", says Professor Granet, the eminent sinologist. "The regions at present treeless and entirely under cultivation formerly contained immense marshes and important forests. Dry and salubrious plains have replaced the shifting lands which, to the east, stretched almost without interruption from the Yellow River to the Blue River. . . . The uniformity which the China of the loess and alluvial regions presents to-day is the result of an immense social effort." As the national topography is thus the creation of the irrigation works, so, it is argued, is the civil service. Dykes, channels, and sluices need constant repair, and if they had been neglected China would have slipped back

their average land-holding did not extend beyond a hundred or two hundred acres: thus they could not be compared with the class of Prussian junkers or the English territorial aristocracy. Yet though the individuals were small men, the class itself enjoyed immense authority. Its possessions gave it the economic resources to stand on its own feet independent of government, and thereby it came to act as a formidable counterpoise to the power of the administration. Still more important, many members of this class had received the education of a mandarin, and though they had chosen to remain in a private rather than enter on a public station in life they took a continuous and informed interest in all the actions of the local officials. Thus they acted unconsciously as the champion of the whole Chinese society, and prevented the mandarinate from becoming the incubus which it might so easily have proved. They were a standing check on the government — a thing unknown in India. They supplied a 'public opinion'. Moreover, the mandarins themselves, being to an overwhelming extent recruited from the gentry, never lost entirely the independent spirit of country gentlemen nor, owing to the close-knit family system, did they ever feel themselves free from the influence of their stay-at-home relations whose interest it was to see that the government followed a restrained policy.[1] Thus in one sense the mandarinate was no more than a grand committee of the rural gentry for the discharge of public business, and in this way the government in China had its roots in the soil of society and was not isolated as was so often the case with government in India.

[1] In spite of this the Chinese Government was little more favourable than the Indian to private economic enterprise. Perhaps this was because the gentry were a rural and not an urban class. Given different political conditions there might well have been an industrial revolution in China in the Tang period. All else favoured it — a growing population, peace, accumulation of capital, technical skill.

5

The contrast in the nature and spirit of the administrations of the two countries can be traced also to their apex, in the character of the monarchy. In India the king, though he might at times be a mystic or a saint, needed to be essentially a military figure ; on him sat the ultimate responsibility ; his was the ultimate power ; if he showed weakness he perished, and not infrequently the state perished with him. To a quite exceptional extent the quality of the government depended on the quality of the monarch. This is reflected in Indian political theory which is very much like that of Tudor England.

> The cease of Majesty
> Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it, with it. It is a massy wheel
> Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd: which when it falls,
> Each small annexment, petty consequence,
> Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
> Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

Chinese monarchy, on the other hand, was a much less personal institution. If the Chinese emperor was in theory no less autocratic than the Indian, China was in fact ruled by a governmental machine rather than by a man. Though the Chinese emperor was an indispensable part of the machine he was seldom able, except in the case of such exceptional persons as the great monarchs of the Tang dynasty, or Kang Hsi and Chien Lung in more recent times, to impose his personality upon the system. Here and there he might capriciously exert his authority, but he could never dominate the whole range of the administration. He was really a strictly constitutional sovereign. Indeed in some respects his importance was less in his temporal than in his spiritual functions. For the curious fact is that in Chinese society, one of the most secular the world has known, there lingered on rites

and beliefs which were drawn from the most ancient ages and which assumed a kind of mystic connection between the virtue of the emperors and the general welfare of the community. As late as 1911 the emperor of the most sceptical society in the world still performed at Peking fertility rites which would have been more in place in the South Seas.[1]

6

The contrast found in the political institutions of the two countries can be traced through all branches of their social and cultural life. Chinese society is in some ways as archaic as that of India : but it is built on different lines. It possesses its own taboos, its own peculiar family system, and an elaborate social organisation built on the clan. These, in spite of superficial resemblances, are all very different from the Indian institutions — caste, Brahmanism, untouchability.[2] So also does Chinese philosophy, which is ethical, optimistic, humane, contrast with Indian philosophy, which is metaphysical, inclined to pessimism, and inclined to be so obsessed with the universe as to ignore the life of men. So also does the genial and secular Chinese temperament contrast with the more sombre if more spiritual Indian mind.

If we penetrate to the life of the village we find there, it is true, certain broad similarities, especially in the

[1] It is another curious paradox that in the rationalist Chinese society the monarchy should preserve a priestly character, while in India, soaked in religion, the theory of kingship has always been temporal and matter-of-fact. The Chinese emperor was supposed by a kind of sympathetic magic to control the fate of his subjects. If he was virtuous, all in the world went well : if he walked after the devices and desires of his own heart the world entered on a time of troubles. This theory seems at last to have become extinct in China with the fall of the empire in 1911, and curiously enough it now seems to be springing up for the first time in India, Mr. Gandhi, with his stress on the need for virtue in a leader, his belief that the lapses of his party are the reflection of his own personal failings, and his practice of fasting for the common good, comes very near to Chinese ideas.

[2] There are vestigial traces in China (and still more in Japan) of something very much like untouchability. But there are no large pariah populations as in India.

economic organisation. For centuries the Indian and Chinese farmers have known the same tribulations — famine, drought, flood, the exactions of the money-lender and the tax collector. Their methods of husbandry have often borne close resemblances. Yet these similarities are shared also by the peasantry of many other countries, European no less than Asiatic. And it must be noticed that the behaviour and temperament of the Chinese peasant has in many ways been different from that of the Indian. He has been more given to insurrection. (The nearest parallel to the peasant risings in China are to be found not in India but in Russia, in the movements of Stenka Razin and Pugachev.) His artistic sense has been different. And to the extent to which the peasant of either country has participated in the culture of the superior classes — to the extent to which he has come into contact with the Confucian philosophy in its popularised form or with the devotional worship of Siva or Krishna — the divergence is at once greatly enlarged.

To sum up. In the pictures of China and India in the two thousand years or more between the beginning of their history and the time when the challenge of the Western powers brought home to them the consciousness of a common Asiatic citizenship there are but few points of resemblance. Their political history, their class structure, their culture and philosophies have been radically different. The difference indeed has been no less than between India and Europe.

7

If their past evolution has been so unlike, it is, however, true that from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards India and China have experienced stimuli which have been not dissimilar. Both countries have experienced the impact of the West. Both were exposed to pressure not as in the past on their land frontiers but from maritime

powers. The life of both has in certain respects tended to take on a Western colour. Moreover, a generation ago China sought to make the same experiment in parliamentary government which India makes to-day. For all these reasons, though we are satisfied that such deep differences exist between Chinese and Indian civilisation as to make the experience of the one of only partial interest to the other, yet it may be worth while pursuing this comparative study down to the present day, seeking from this whatever guidance is to be obtained for the framing of a practical policy for India.

The impact of the West upon China came later than in India, and when Clive and Hastings were dictating to the Moghuls the British traders who ventured further east still held in a rather fearful respect the august emperor who at this date reigned at Peking. But the fate of China though delayed was not averted. As the nineteenth century wore on the Manchu dynasty which had endured for two centuries began to show signs of senility, as had happened with all its predecessors who had held the throne beyond a certain span, and the misfortune of the country was that this coincided with a redoubling of the vigour of the Western powers.

Thus China came into acute peril. But there was this great difference between the history of India and China, that China maintained throughout its national unity and political independence.[1] It suffered, it is true, infringements of its sovereignty. It was obliged to grant extraterritorial rights to the Western powers and to permit them to establish settlements in the principal ports under their own systems of government. It was compelled to cede certain territory outright. It placed its maritime customs under foreign control, and it accepted foreign officers in its administration. Yet in spite of all these humiliations, and in spite of the general expectation in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century that the country was about

[1] The outcome of its present war with Japan is still uncertain. But it seems impossible to believe that all China will pass under Japanese sway.

to be partitioned by the Western governments, it contrived to win its way through as an independent power, and in the thirties of the present century, before the beginning of the present war with Japan, to claim for itself something of its old position in Asia.

China's advantage in this respect over India was not a matter of luck or chance. It might perhaps be said that China only escaped because in the early years of the nineteenth century no Western power made the actual attempt at conquest, and because in the latter part of the century the position was reversed and so many governments — England, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan — competed for the spoil that each prevented the other from securing an effective advantage.[1] Yet it is doubtful whether, even if a single dominant European power had sought deliberately to reduce China, it could have accomplished its purpose. Certainly it would have been an enterprise very different from the achievement of supremacy in India. For in China there has always been a strong national consciousness, even before this was further stimulated by the importation of Western political ideas. This took the form of a convinced, almost smug, sense of superiority, shared in by the peasant and coolie no less than by the mandarin, over the Western peoples and all their works. To the Westerner who visits first China and then India nothing is more surprising than the contrast between his impression that the Chinese, hospitable and affable as they are, in their hearts regard him as a lower order of being to whom they tolerantly condescend, and his often embarrassing impression in India that, in spite of political rancour, the European is regarded as in some way superior. In these circumstances no European power could have raised in China a native army with which to conquer the country, as happened in India when the East India Company came to supremacy by means of Indian

[1] In India in the eighteenth century the English, French, and Dutch competed for advantage. But the competition ended not in a stalemate but in the supremacy of one of the competitors.

troops.[1] And even though such a power had overthrown the imperial government — which at no period would have been a very hard matter — it would have found itself merely at the beginning of its troubles. For to establish an administration in the face of the resolute non-co-operation of the populace, both gentry and peasant, might well have proved beyond its power — as Japan to-day appears to be finding it in the regions which it has militarily occupied.

China thus preserved its independence, but it must not be supposed that its contact with the West did not lead to the profoundest changes. The impact of the Western economy caused an economic dislocation whose effects, if especially severe in the river and coastal regions, extended also far inland. These were the more serious because they came at a time when an economic crisis was already developing from the pressure on the soil of a population which after two centuries of tranquillity had swollen to unmanageable dimensions. The result was that from the thirties of the nineteenth century onwards China was continually troubled by peasant revolts and mass upheaval. Even more disturbing was the impact of the Western ideas spreading from the schools set up by Christian missionaries and strongly exciting a middle class which was active, out of sympathy with the old ideas of China, looking forward to a world in which all things were to be made new, anxious to introduce into China the way of life and political and social institutions of the West.

These changes, which took place gradually during the nineteenth century, did for the political régime what the

[1] It is true that small forces have been raised, for example at Wei-Hai-Wei. But this is different from raising the very large armies for more extensive conquest. It may perhaps be objected that Chinese nationalism did not prevent the conquest of the country by the Manchus in the seventeenth century. But the Manchu dynasty was able to maintain itself only by becoming more Chinese than the Chinese themselves. Thus it was not unacceptable, but a European political supremacy would have been resisted as a mortal threat to Chinese culture.

Western powers had been unable to do or had refrained from doing. The imperial government was not unaware of the peril in which it was placed and it sought spasmodically and half-heartedly to modernise itself. But in this endeavour it was handicapped because the mandarinate which had served China so long and so well was in its very nature conservative and opposed to change. A class bred up in the Confucian classics and selected for office by reason of its proficiency therein could not take the initiative in a policy of westernisation and innovation such as that which had served Japan, since a programme of this kind could have been carried out only by means of ruthlessness, opportunism, and contempt for tradition, qualities the very opposite of what Confucianism stood for. No Confucian could be a revolutionary. Thus the old régime dragged on and became ever more obsolete.

The crash came in 1911. A revolt began at Hankow, the port on the middle Yangtze, and was taken up by province after province. The writ of the imperial government ceased to run. On 12th February 1912 the emperor — a boy — abdicated.

8

To the empire there succeeded a republic, and at Peking was convoked a parliament consisting of a Chamber of Deputies with 586 members and a Senate with 274. This was the time when throughout the world the confidence in parliamentary institutions was still rising and it was assumed that parliamentary government was the natural goal of political progress in all countries, whatever their previous history or present structure. The announcement that China, the most populous state in the world and possessing the most ancient civilisation, had fallen into line with the general trend, was greeted abroad by liberal circles with satisfaction but not with surprise.

In retrospect this brief period of complacent optimism appears in the same tragic light as the other periods of fraternal good-will which have been a phase in the course

of most sanguinary revolutions. This was a kind of Kerensky period in Chinese history.

China did not have the opportunity which is India's of developing representative institutions under the sheltering protection of a powerful executive. There was no British army or British civil service to maintain law and order while the infant institutions gathered strength. On the contrary its parliament was at once exposed to the political typhoon which with the fall of the monarchy had begun to rage.

The story of the life of the parliament, short as it is, is too complex to be recorded here. Parliament was chiefly absorbed in a prolonged quarrel with the executive which was in the hands of a general who schemed to become emperor and to found a new dynasty. Its weakness was exposed when its leading member was assassinated, and when, though this was known to be at the instance of the executive, parliament made no effective reply. The quarrel lasted for four years and ended only because with the growing sense of political disintegration the various provinces ceased to obey the central government. If the old régime had in the words of its last able minister been a paper tiger it had at least preserved the appearance of being fanged, but the new régime was patently without claws. Thus, alike from the executive and legislature which had contested the possession of power, power passed away.

This was virtually the end of the parliamentary experiment. The chief cause of the failure was that parliamentary institutions proved unable to command the loyalty of local governors, and the country thus disintegrated. And this happened in a society which had few of the same deep divisions as in India, but was in fact bound together by a common script, common customs, and a common philosophy.

The next period was one of confusion. Political authority was partitioned between military commanders in the various provinces and these engaged in a civil war which plunged the country for ten years into the deepest

misery, led to a spoliation of the people perhaps unparalleled in the modern world, arrested the economic development, and confined the enlightened and educated classes to the seaports where they lived in safe but unprofitable leisure under the protection of the foreign powers. India might do well to meditate on these melancholy events. But of more interest for the present study is the way in which political order re-emerged from this chaos. Salvation came through the *Kuomintang* or People's Party. This, which had been built up by the celebrated Dr. Sun Yat-sen but which derived in fact from the ancient secret societies of China, underwent a kind of second founding in the early twenties. As the apostle of modernism, promising to free China from the curse of banditry and warlords, it became the focus of all that was progressive in Chinese society and was joined by ambitious young soldiers (such as Chiang Kai-shek), students with radical ideas, business men anxious for peace and a world in which they could carry on their commercial operations ; and in the rural districts it was supported by the squirearchy, traditionally the main prop of Chinese administration. The Kuomintang established itself in Canton, the rich port of the South, thus obtaining the funds for the construction of a more or less modern army. Thenceforward its history is curiously similar to that of the rise to power in India of the East India Company : both Kuomintang and Company expanded their sway and became paramount because politically they were the best organised power in the land.[1] In 1926 the Kuomintang took Hankow, in 1927 Nanking, the Southern capital, and Shanghai, the richest of the commercial centres. As a result it was recognised by the powers as the national government of China, and set itself to repairing the damage of the civil wars.

With the policy of this government we are not here concerned. For all its shortcomings it was in some ways

[1] The finances of Bengal served the Company as did the finances of Canton the Kuomintang.

the most efficient administration that China had known. It succeeded in doing what had been accomplished by none of its predecessors since the revolution : it survived. It was an agent which showed itself competent to put down banditry, carry through a delicate monetary reform, build in a short space of time more than 100,000 miles of roadway, lay the foundation of social services, reduce sensibly the dissipation of national vigour through opium-smoking, win the respect of the technical organisations of the League of Nations which assisted its efforts, and, when the test came in 1937, support worthily the national cause in war. All these achievements are of much importance. But here our interest is only to discern what, when the waters went down and the Kuomintang was left dominating the scene, was the structure of this new government. And much as we may admire its record and applaud the notable statesmen who direct it, we must not blind ourselves to the fact that of all the liberal and parliamentary ideals which flourished so bravely in the years following the fall of the empire hardly a trace remains. It is true that the Kuomintang has promulgated a constitution which is one of the most elaborate in the world and which contains some of the forms of parliamentarianism. But the constitution is so evidently a screen to the true government that even the pretence that it is a reality has been given up. China to-day is a party state, its government, if more humane, being of the same type as the Russian or German. It bears all the marks of these régimes. Opposition is illegal. He who does not belong to the party is nowhere. It is in the party committees or in the headquarters of the army which the party has created that the vital decisions are taken, not in the formal institutions of the state ; and if realities and not forms are considered, the centuries of political travail in Europe and the examples which captivated the Chinese intelligentsia a generation ago might, as far as modern China is concerned, never have existed at all.

9

What conclusions are drawn by the Indian patriot? If he prides himself on being a realist he will perhaps say that, speaking frankly, he regards parliamentary institutions as peculiarly a product of the West, and that he hardly expects them to succeed in India any better than in China. But he will add that this need not be taken too tragically since the Chinese form of government is perfectly tolerable and is therefore an attractive alternative. Congress has already certain close resemblances to the Kuomintang in composition and outlook, and there is no reason why it should not fill the same role.

It would be idle to pretend that such an argument falls happily on British ears. It is true that Great Britain has no desire to confine India within a strait waistcoat of uncongenial institutions. But English opinion will not cease to affirm that certain things are of value in political life — individual freedom, tolerance, etc. — and it believes that these are more likely to be safeguarded by some kind of Parliamentary State (though not necessarily on the lines of the Act of 1935) than by the Party State.

It would go further. Once again it is necessary to look to past history. The argument we are considering assumes that India could without difficulty adopt the Kuomintang form of government. But is this really so? The Kuomintang cannot be understood simply in the light of recent events in China's history. It is something which fits in with China's past. It can maintain its authority only because of the natural unity of the Chinese people: its intimate connection with the landed gentry reproduces the conditions of the old régime; its officials, though the products of Western universities instead of the Confucian schools, enjoy their prestige as the heirs of the mandarins. China in fact submits to the Kuomintang because its system is not so very much unlike that of the *ancien régime*. But in India do the conditions exist which would make such a system acceptable? Before Congress could hold a

position like that of the Kuomintang it would need to beat down formidable antagonists, notably the Moslem League, and having attained power could expect to receive nothing like the same general support as does the Kuomintang. The Party State in India would be a quite different creature from the Party State in China. It might indeed prove no less difficult to establish and maintain than the Parliamentary State. Thus here again does it not seem that for India the experience of China is " vain wisdom all and false philosophy " ?

There is no magical property in the fact of being an Eastern country which makes all Oriental societies find a uniform solution for their political problems. Each must work out its own destiny in the future as in the past. And there seems therefore no reason why India should follow in the footsteps of China any more eagerly than in those of Great Britain.

CONCLUSION

The attempt has been made to describe some of the perplexities of the Indian problem. Especially it has been sought to discover what are the facts disclosed by the actual working of the Act of 1935.

Whether the Act or some measure drafted on similar lines will prove acceptable to India it is still too early to say. Certainly there is no reason for despair or for abandoning the long-continued policy of fostering the development of popular government. Yet in concluding this survey it is impossible to suppose that the way is likely to be smooth. As the Egyptians used at their feasts to bring in a skeleton in order that they should not forget sober matters, so would India do well to bear in mind certain ugly possibilities and to guard against them.

The only sane way of conducting a great political enterprise such as that on which India is engaged is to assume that success is ultimately certain and to rule out the word failure from the vocabulary. Yet the hardihood rising from over-confidence is no less dangerous than the paralysis resulting from despair ; and in such an arduous experiment as India is attempting it may lead to a salutary caution to reflect from time to time on the consequences of a false step and on the price which might have to be paid for errors.

Let us assume for the moment that the present impasse has ended and that a democratic constitution of some form or other has been devised and accepted. Let it be hoped that ways have been found of reassuring the Moslems and that India remains a united country. It is easy to imagine with what exuberance the nationalist politicians will undertake their new responsibilities. They will be buoyed up by the belief that they are the first truly legitimate government in India because the first elected

by the people. Before them will open the glittering prospect of using the machine of law and administration to transform the present social relations; and they will not be content until the state has organised the same elaborate system of social services as is maintained by the most progressive governments in the West.[1] All their thoughts will be on what the political machine is to accomplish: that it will function as it is intended, and that its wheels will turn smoothly, will be taken for granted. India will stand on the top of happy hours; and perhaps it is scarcely generous to suggest that clouds will arise even before the sun is very high in the sky.

But troubles will not be avoided. So much is happening in India. It is agitated by a struggle between religious communities as fierce as that in seventeenth-century Europe, by a nationalist fever as acute as that of revolutionary France, by an economic class war as portentous as that of the contemporary Western world. Its society, which has preserved so much that is archaic and incompatible with the modern world, is being dissolved and shaped anew: the process is likely to be agonising and convulsive. India in fact is compressing into the present brief years many of the movements and transitions which in Europe occupied centuries and which even in their slower pace in that continent caused turmoil and confusion, shaking all political order. Nor will the

[1] In their eyes the state discharges no useful functions, and is indeed a superfluous organisation, unless it assumes these obligations — a test which would disqualify almost every government which existed until a generation ago. With a slur of this kind India damns the British Raj; and as if to draw attention to the eccentricity of its thought, condemns also the governmental system of England before the present century, overlooking the fact that the government of that day, limited though its functions were in comparison with the present, was the agent which chiefly determined the character and life of the people — which made England protestant not catholic, which permitted the cult of freedom to be regarded as a virtue not a crime, which enabled commerce to flourish and a middle class to rise. So in India to-day; for even though the state has not yet undertaken the obligation of widows' pensions or universal education it is none the less the keystone of the national life. Above all it maintains domestic peace, without which there can be no civilisation at all.

dangers be limited to shocks from within. Whatever the result of the present war we are not likely in the present century to see an international Utopia, and in all the foreseeable future India must reckon with neighbours ready to exploit its weakness, whether by open invasion or, still more dangerous, by organising internal dissension. All these menaces the new institutions must be prepared to encounter. And they will at first be very fragile. Only in the course of years can they acquire the prestige and the venerability which gives strength.

Durable political institutions have before now been born in times of stress. The constitution of the United States of America was drafted under the threat of civil war, of social revolution, and financial collapse. But the infant born in such stormy weather must be nursed with skill and devotion if it is to survive.

Unhappily few contemporary politicians in India seem to be aware that the new political order will rely on a structure of habit and behaviour which can easily be undermined. Nor do they seem able to comprehend how great would be the calamity of such a breakdown. The present generation grew up in a society whose foundations seemed so solid and in a landscape so unchanging that security is taken for granted, and it finds it as hard to believe in the possibility of a cataclysm as it was for a Londoner before the present war to believe that he might one day see his city in ruins. The memory of the tumult and disorder of the eighteenth century has been dimmed by a century of peace, and though catastrophe is a possibility which the intellect can conceive it seems so remote that it has lost the power to alarm. Indeed, in the mood of boredom which security induces, some of the younger men look towards a possible disaster as a not unpleasurable diversion and speak lightly of civil war and revolution because they have no vivid picture of the suffering, squalor, and poverty which they engender.[1]

[1] Of the mood prevailing in France before the revolution, Burke wrote, " There must be a grand spectacle to rouse the imagination, grown torpid

Even the more responsible among them who would stop short of loosing such horrors on the world nevertheless advocate reckless policies without considering at what point or from what quarter a saving hand would be stretched out. It is impossible indeed to avoid the conclusion that many unconsciously rely on British tutelage saving them in the last extremity, and that they have never in their inmost minds grasped what its complete withdrawal would imply.

That is certainly true of some. In the case of others their attitude towards politics is a light-hearted experimental one and they are willing to take risks because they do not realise their immensity.

For a sobering spectacle of what even among a peaceable and civilised people may be the consequences of the weakening or breakdown of the ordinary institutions of government, India has to look but a little way beyond its borders. This is to China, whose chequered history was traced in the last chapter. China started with many advantages which India lacks — a people united for two thousand years, a common script throughout the country, a skilled governing class, long traditions of civilian administration. Yet China passed through a quarter of a century of agony which led in the end inevitably to invasion from abroad : and if to-day it is rather its heroic resistance to Japan than its internal troubles which holds the world's attention, let us not forget that those troubles have by no means been overcome ; that China's democratic experiment has been abandoned ; and that the emergence of the Kuomintang as a political power was bought at a cost of civil war and famine whose victims must be numbered in almost astronomical figures.

Nobody who has had sight of a polity in dissolution as in China can thenceforward regard without horror the

with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years' security, and the still unanimating repose of public safety ". Compare also Voltaire's melancholy observation that men are destined to live in the convulsions of disquiet or in the boredom of plenty.

possibility of a breakdown of government. It may perhaps be alarmist to see any such fate in store for India. The traveller in China, even before the present war, was surrounded with all the signs of social upheaval — burned villages, abandoned fields, towns fortified, strolling bands of soldiers, stories of banditry on every side. India is in complete contrast. The peasantry, it is true, are on a low standard of living but everywhere the atmosphere is one of tranquillity, of peace which had endured beyond the memory of any living man. Villages are orderly, roads safe, commerce thrives ; the great cities take on more and more a modern shape ; and the Indian is perhaps entitled to complain that the vision which sees in this vigorous and exuberant being a potential skeleton is unnecessarily morbid. Yet cheer himself how he will, and though he tries to keep gloomy thoughts from his mind, the discerning student is conscious of a persistent doubt and misgiving ; and he cannot but uneasily wonder whether he is witnessing not only the sunset of British authoritarian rule but also the sunset of the greatest age of material prosperity which India has ever known.

It may perhaps be represented that in some respects contemporary Indian society is so unsatisfactory that its disappearance would be a not unqualified disaster. The world is dying, let it die, is the attitude of many circles to-day not only in India but also in the West. Yet such nihilism is not really rational. The world of India today is a better world than that of China. India has tremendous problems of reconstruction before it. Yet it is a land where the heavy-handedness of officials though not eliminated has been checked ; where there is at least a fair chance of obtaining justice from the courts ; where there is freedom of economic enterprise and in normal times a wide freedom of political activity ; above all, where there is peace. When one reflects on the blood-drenched history of Asia one clings to the present and dreads what the future may hold.

PART II

By Sir George Schuster, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., M.C., M.P.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM SURVEYED

THE report which is printed as Part I of this book presents a picture both clear and arresting. It has been drawn on broad lines aiming to bring out the main features. Inevitably much detail is omitted, and inevitably also the wide generalisations involved in such treatment may be criticised as inaccurate or insufficient at certain points. But the main features are clearly portrayed, and those who will perhaps deem some to be exaggerated or wrongly drawn may find value even in what they regard as errors if these force their attention to vital points and compel them to test the accuracy of their own contrary interpretations.

We have before us the picture of an ancient Eastern society whose political and economic organisation was formerly of a rather simple kind, but whose social institutions were both archaic and extremely complex. This society has under British administration and British educational influence undergone a transformation. The India of to-day is something totally different from the India before the impact of British influence. And — a point which for the immediate problem is of even more vital significance — the India of to-day is something which in its essence is partly a British creation. Strands of British character are inextricably woven into the texture of the Indian fabric. Some Indian Nationalists may bitterly complain that in effecting this result the British have done India and Indians a great wrong — have forced them into unnatural ways of thought, disturbed them with foreign ideas, demoralised them with false scales of values, and, worst of all, by subordinating them to a long period of tutelage, have sapped their capacity to fight their own battles or to maintain the

order of life which they have established for them. I write as one who holds views directly contrary to this pessimistic condemnation, one who believes that out of the interaction of the two races something very fine has been built up and that if that interaction can be continued on a basis of equality and equal self-respect, the best qualities of each can be evoked and a relationship formed which will be an example to the world and a help in the solution of its problems. But on that I shall write more fully in a later chapter. For my present purpose it is enough to say that, even if the pessimistic view is right, it cannot alter the inescapable fact that India to-day is essentially in part a British creation. The conception of national unity over the whole Indian continent, the security, the rule of law, the standards of administration, the political doctrine, the economic régime — all represent ideas, habits, conditions, achievements which would have either been non-existent or at least quite different if it had not been for British influence.

Current Indian political discussion tends to select special features for criticism, while the great body of habits necessary for a continuance of orderly but free life is taken for granted as though it were something fixed and permanent, a natural element like the air we breathe. But it is not. To cast one's eye back over the pages of past history, to search down into the foundations of the present order, is to find proof that it is not. The transformation of Indian society of which I have spoken has been the result of a government which was at once profoundly stable and profoundly liberal in the sense that it allowed the maximum liberty to Indians to work out their own social and cultural development. That stability and liberality were British contributions and represent some of the strands of British character which, as I have already written, have become woven into the fabric of Indian life. Will these strands survive when British direction of the administration is removed? And if they do not, how will that affect the strength and quality of the fabric? What

stresses will it stand? For what purposes will it be suited? These are key questions for any statesman or political student who seeks to mould policies or frame constitutions or to forecast the future.

And there is a second set of questions intimately connected with the first. The transformation of Indian society under British rule has been in progress for more than a century, but only in the latter decades have we been faced with an 'Indian problem'. This problem is essentially political. It is to devise the new political institutions which have been made necessary by changes in economic and class structure, by the development in India of great political parties and above all by the quickening of intellectual life. The Indian political spirit thus quickened seeks a body in which to incarnate itself. This cannot be provided by the traditional institutions of ancient India, for that is the body which has been sloughed off. The new body which British and Indian thought alike have hitherto been contemplating, consists of a system of representative institutions broadly similar to those under which Great Britain herself is governed. Can the Indian spirit find a home in such a body? Or does it need one of a quite different kind, evolved from Oriental rather than British beginnings?

The two sets of questions thus formulated indicate the nature of the problems. The planning of statesmanlike conduct for their solution, a task difficult enough in any case, is made more difficult by the disturbance of political passions. The new India to-day is reacting so violently against the continuance of British tutelage that any form of British co-operation, even in the steps towards the removal of that tutelage, is resisted and resented. And to these difficulties is added a new danger — the danger from predatory powers looming from the upheaval of the surrounding world.

And even this does not complete the tale of forebodings which must oppress the observer who tries relentlessly to search out the truth. This new Indian

spirit is no single force of ardent purpose, but tends to divide itself into a multitude of forces conflicting with each other. Can such a spirit support the throes of entering a new body, and then, having torn out the strengthening strands of the fabric which might protect that body in its immaturity, stand alone in a world swept by cold winds and peopled by armed desperadoes?

But perhaps it is more instructive to leave these figurative presentations and turn to a closer study of the practical issues.

The survey in Part I has brought out how the policies of past generations are now leading up to their final culmination in an attempt to establish a full system of parliamentary democracy in India, and has revealed many features in the Indian situation and in its past history which raise questions whether such a plan can achieve success. Let us review some of these features.

The first striking point is that in India hitherto the system of government has had no roots spreading right down among the masses of the people. Government has been something superimposed upon them and not growing up from them. This condition is indeed typical of a phenomenon observable not merely in regard to the functions of government. Political thought and all those conditions of mind which characterise what Lord Halifax as Viceroy used to describe as "Political India" are characteristic only of a fairly thin layer of classes detached from the deep underlying strata of the masses. Similarly much of the activity characteristic of modern civilisation permeates only a thin level at the top. Banking facilities, for example, and all the modern machinery for the control of currency and credit, operate independently in a narrow layer above the activities of the great body of the people. Literacy and education do not yet run among the masses. It may be asked, then, whether democracy introduced in such a society will create anything like that system of broad-based popular government which well-meaning British opinion desires

to see established in India. Is it to be expected in fact that, merely by extending the privilege of votes down to the lower strata, all the disabilities of illiteracy and lack of root connections between the government and the great body of the people can be overcome? Or will this wide grant of votes merely give the thin layer of educated classes the chance of playing upon the ignorance of the masses and exploiting them? Can there in these circumstances be any solid foundation for a democratic system or any assurance that it will be operated to the benefit of the masses of the people?

The next fundamental condition to be observed is closely connected with that just described. Indian history reveals no tradition of democracy. To introduce such a system would mean not historical continuity but a striking new experiment. Napoleon once said that the strength of a people lies in its history; but so also may its weakness. Though for a time a people may in its public life seem to have shed its old habits yet these are liable to reassert themselves. How different from the past is the Indian scene to-day, with parliaments, law courts, press, individual rights, a middle class! Yet are we perhaps watching an interlude acted as it were in front of a drop curtain? And is this even now about to be rung up, and will there then be revealed the familiar sight of the despot whose throne reposes on the triple pillar of soldiers, tax collectors, and spies? Or, in modern terminology, a Dictator defended by a People's Army, a party bureaucracy, and a Gestapo?

The boldness of setting up parliamentary institutions in an Oriental country which has hitherto known only despotism was of course stressed over and over again at the time of the Round Table Conferences, and Indian politicians became understandably weary of the theme. Yet the truth remains that the political system of the Act of 1935 is fundamentally the British system, and that there are few precedents for a country successfully adopting alien institutions. A constitution, like highly perishable

commodities, does not enter easily into international commerce. The British system itself has a history of a thousand years or more : turn wherever we may in our political organisation, we touch ideas and customs which take us back to the Plantagenets and even beyond. Even the minor administrative phenomena reveal this continuity, as, for example, if one studies such a humble activity as land drainage one finds that the Lords, Bailiffs, and Jurats of Romney Marsh, still legally in existence, had an effective career of over 700 years and that their laws and customs furnished an exemplar for the powers of the later Commissioners of Sewers appointed under the Statute of Sewers of 1531, and that from the powers of these Commissioners has been built up without any break of continuity all the elaborate system which exists in England to-day. These trivial incidents are revealing. The British constitution works because it is for the most part composed of institutions which are felt by the British people to be part and parcel of their being, and to which by a kind of instinct they are ready to do homage. Can it be hoped that the Indian ryot will have the same feelings about any Indian Central Legislative Assembly and Council of State ?

Let us turn to a third consideration. Can a system of parliamentary democracy succeed unless based on the unity of a true national feeling ? Many definitions have been offered of the unity which constitutes a nation. From the point of view of practical politics to say that a people is a nation must surely mean at least that the citizens as a whole feel themselves belonging to a community their loyalty to which transcends all other loyalties — whether to city, county, province, ethnological group, community, church, or commercial organisation. The test comes at a time of emergency when in a true nation all its parties by a kind of instinct sink their differences and act in union. Can it be said that such a unity exists in India ? Has such unity as has appeared to exist in the past gone further than combination in the desire to

establish some sort of freedom from alien government in India? And are there not signs that as the prospect of that freedom has come into view over the horizon the unifying cement is weakening and the various sections have begun to manœuvre for position to use the new freedom to their own advantage? That there should exist internal divisions among peoples does not necessarily preclude the existence of an overriding national unity; but everything depends on the depth of the divisions. And the experience of other countries proves that where the gulf between different sections is very wide, a system democratic government is full of perils.

Lastly, seeing that it is a system of *parliamentary* democracy which is under consideration it must be asked whether the major parties in India have shown themselves adapted to parliamentary conditions and to all that is necessary for the working of that particular form of constitution. (Parliamentary democracy, let it be explained, is used to mean a system in which the Executive is continuously responsible to, and dependent on, a parliamentary majority.) This raises questions the significance of which extends beyond the bounds of the Indian problem. It has become a commonplace to recognise that the success of parliamentary democracy in England has been due to special traditions and conditions which are not universally applicable and are not necessarily permanent, even in England.

It is very necessary to appreciate what are the conditions for the successful and beneficent working of this system. These are not easily stated in direct and precise terms. The permeating spirit is the main thing. There must be a certain unity, overriding party divisions, between the parliamentary majority of the day supporting the Government and the minority which is in opposition, and there must be a reciprocal attitude between the two. This expresses itself in various characteristic symptoms. Thus it may be said that an alternative administration in opposition, able and willing to become the Government

but with no wish, real or professed, to disrupt the state, is a necessity for the satisfactory working of our system. Again there must be acceptance by the minority of the majority's decisions, and a reciprocal restraint in the use which the majority makes of its position as well as a limitation in the interpretation of its powers. Mr. Amery expressed this in a recent book[1] when he wrote that

> the idea that a majority in the House of Commons, just because it is a majority, should be entitled to pass what legislation it pleases, as expeditiously as it pleases and regardless of the extent of the changes involved or of the intensity of opposition to them, the idea, in fact, that majority edicts are the same thing as laws, is wholly alien to the spirit of our Constitution.

When these characteristic symptoms of the British system are further examined it will be found that they really depend on the existence of a community which, though divided into political parties, is essentially a single community, and in which there is a fluctuating body of voters — the 'shifting middle' — liable to swing from one party to another, which reacts instinctively against extravagant movements on one side or the other, and which thus provides a safeguard against violent stresses being set up and makes it possible for changes in public opinion to express themselves in changes of the Government.

Can it be said that the conditions thus described are likely to be built up out of the interaction between the present political parties in India? Have the Congress or the Moslem League or the Hindu Mahasabha or the Forward Bloc or the Khaksars shown the necessary parliamentary attitude? Have they not rather revealed the outlook which we have come to associate with the Nazi or Fascist parties? Are they not set on something like permanent enjoyment of power? Congress, it is true, takes as the central point of its agitation the demand for wider powers for the Central Parliament; but is there

[1] *The Forward View*, by The Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, M.P. (Geoffrey Bles, 1935).

not some justice in the comparison which has been drawn between this parliamentary phase of Congress activity and that of the German Nazis who looked upon the Reichstag not as an institution to be cherished but as one to be exploited in their struggle for supremacy? Certainly it cannot be said that Congress when it was recently in power in the provinces did anything to lessen the fears that might be felt under this head. On the contrary, as recorded in the survey of Part I, it sought to build up a political power which was separate from the political organs of the state, outside and dominant over the constitutional machine. The Congress ministers in the provinces seem to have held themselves responsible not to the legislatures, as was provided in the constitution, but to an organ unknown to the law, the central caucus of the Congress party operating from Wardha; and it was this caucus which over-night paralysed constitutional government and ordered all the Congress ministries to resign, at a time when in the affairs of their provinces these ministries had no shadow of cause for resignation. It is said that some obeyed the command with reluctance; nevertheless they all obeyed. Of the attitude of the Moslem League it is harder to speak since this has not yet enjoyed political power; but Moslem speakers have seldom disguised their preference for authoritarian and somewhat martial forms of government.

And these thoughts lead from a contemplation of the Indian scene as now surveyed to a reflection on what may happen. Suppose that from the starting-point of a parliamentary government something quite different begins to emerge. Suppose that the Fascist tendencies of the parties begin to prevail and that one party, perhaps by more or less constitutional means, establishes a dictatorship (Hitler in his rise to power barely infringed the letter of the constitution). Suppose then proscriptions, concentration camps, confiscations, and a shocked world opinion. Or suppose the opposite and that the constitutional experiment breaks down into an open clash between the two

major parties or into sheer anarchy. In either of these cases what would be the duty and the task of the British Government? To acquiesce, which would mean acquiescing in ruthless dictatorship or disorder and carnage, or to rescind its purpose of final withdrawal and forcibly restore order among a people whose rights of self-determination it would have solemnly recognised? How would the British public react? How would the masses of India in their hearts wish them to react? Would it be argued that self-government is better than good government and that there is no virtue in a compelled regeneration? Or would common sense, shrinking from the consequences of human folly, brush aside these arguments as theoretical and of no account?

These are some of the considerations to which a perusal of the survey leads me. But they are general or speculative considerations and it is not enough to discuss the Indian problem merely in terms of speculation or of general principles. The political atmosphere has already suffered from that. It is very necessary to foresee dangers which lie beyond the immediate foreground, and, let me add, to be inspired by ideals which may not be immediately realisable. But the course of politics is by its nature a succession of particular problems, often demanding, if disaster is to be prevented, makeshift or short-range measures and often providing by the mere practical operation of such measures an opening for further steps and ultimately an outlet from what may have seemed initially to be a hopeless impasse. There is some hope as well as truth in Bismarck's well-known observation that the only thing more dangerous than the very short-sighted statesman is the very long-sighted one. It may be profitable therefore to review the position in a more practical manner, by taking the plan of the 1935 Act, by considering the reactions in India to various parts of that plan, and by studying precisely at what points or in what respects it is likely to be unsuitable. But even such a specific investigation will be more instructive if, as a pre-

lude, an attempt is made to assess the concrete tasks which will confront a National government in India, and the steps which will be involved in their performance. The next chapters, therefore, will be devoted to this purpose.

To many people of goodwill both in India and in England anxious to see a generous and bold solution of the Indian problem this kind of detailed and pedestrian investigation is a distasteful task. Some indeed there are who may be likened to those in *Paradise Lost* who

> Sat on a hill retired,
> In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high. . . .
> Of happiness and final misery,
> Passion and apathy, glory and shame.

But their fate was that they "found no end, in wandering mazes lost". The Indian problem also has become lost in " wandering mazes ", and it will never be solved until people come down from their hill to the dusty arena of concrete issues.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRACTICAL TASKS OF GOVERNMENT

> "When Ten Kung asked what were the essentials of government, the Master replied: 'Sufficient food, sufficient forces, and the confidence of the people'."
>
> THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS

(*A*) ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES

"*Sufficient food*"

> "Above all things, good policy is to be used, that the treasures and moneys in a State be not gathered into a few hands. For otherwise a state may have great stocks and yet starve. And money is like muck, not good except it be spread."
>
> BACON'S *Essays*

1. THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

WHATEVER form the constitution of India may take, much will depend on the way in which her economic life progresses. In the modern world economic stress has been a great slayer of democracy and liberalism. The best constitution may be wrecked if economic and financial policy are wrongly handled.

The Special Influences of the War

This is a difficult moment at which to review these matters if anything more than a mere analysis of the past is to be attempted. For we are in the midst of cataclysmic changes. The war must have a profound effect, not only directly on India's own economic structure, but also on policies and conditions in the surrounding world from the effects of which India cannot detach herself. It must give a new turn as well as set a new pace to India's industrial development. Whatever theoretical views one

may hold as to the needs for a selective policy of industrialisation and for preserving a balanced economy, or about the dangers of unduly rapid changes, the urgent demands of war will override all these considerations and are already offering Indian industry an irresistible stimulus and opportunity. The projects discussed at the recent Delhi Conference, and the current records of the steadily swelling tide of India's war production, are clear signs of a movement vast in its extent and significance. Indeed, nothing less than an industrial revolution is already at work in India.

In these circumstances it may seem futile to discuss policy or prospects in terms of normal economic conditions. Yet, on reflection, the conclusion must rather be that in the present upheaval it is more than ever necessary to study the existing structure, the factors normally conditioning Indian life, and the fundamental conditions required for establishing a healthy economy for India. For it is just while these changes are going on, and while the whole economic framework is malleable in the heat of war, that there is, on the one hand, need to guard against the distortion of that framework into unsuitable shapes and, on the other, an opportunity to mould it in a pattern which will fit the needs of the future. India has seen her economy influenced by wars on several occasions — for example, during the American Civil War with its effects on her position as a cotton producer, and later of course and more profoundly in 1914–18. On all these occasions, though war conditions have left permanent marks, there has been no real alteration in the main currents and forces of Indian economic life. The present war with its greater reliance on mechanical devices and industrial products will inevitably have a vastly greater effect on India, but it cannot change the underlying conditions affecting her economy. Its greater effect may take the form of drawing her further from her normal and healthy economic course, and if that is so it makes it all the more necessary to keep that course in view. If, therefore, the survey which follows may seem to some readers

to be out of touch with reality because it discusses conditions without reference at all points to the effects of concurrent developments, that implies no failure to take account of these, but indicates rather a method of treatment deliberately adopted and based on a definite judgment as to the relative importance of the material factors. It would in any case be tedious to interpolate constant references to the possible effects of war developments on each matter which is discussed.

Influences of World Economy on India

As for the conditions in the surrounding world and their effects on India, no one of course can foretell what will be the precise state when the war ends ; but some idea of what may be required can be gained from a study of what was happening in the pre-war years. There has been no period in the world's history when economic problems have affected men's lives and thoughts more than in the years between the end of the last war and the beginning of this. Whether economic difficulties have been the main cause of the present war, or whether the " power policies " of the Totalitarian States which involved them in the attempt to build up a system of self-sufficiency for war have been the chief aggravating factor in the world's economic difficulties, is an argument into which it is unnecessary to enter. What is certain is that if humanity is to look forward to a reign of peace, progress, and social stability, some way must be found to remove the international economic frictions and the national economic problems which were disturbing the world between 1918 and 1939.

There is no space in a single chapter devoted to India for a full analysis of the world economic situation. I will only state briefly the two main points from my own conclusions which form the background to what I have to say on India. The first point concerns international action. The great need is for a wider international economic co-operation than has hitherto prevailed, conducted with less regard for narrow and immediate national

purposes and a greater appreciation of the ultimate benefit to all which will come from respecting mutual interests. Only in this way can be provided the best foundations for peace and prosperity. One of the surest practical contributions to the strengthening of *peace*, to the weakening of potential causes of war, must be to diminish the economic significance of political boundaries. One of the surest ways for promoting *prosperity* must be to spread the practical appreciation of the truth that no nation can find the best level for its own economic health on the basis of complete isolation and economic self-sufficiency. To avoid misunderstanding it must be added that these phrases, though expressing that aspect of the truth which is relevant to the present argument, do not tell the whole story. Mere economic co-operation without political co-operation is not enough, for the simple reason that it cannot be achieved. The whole of modern development, social as well as defensive, has been tending to extend the economic significance of political boundaries. The economic barriers can only be reduced or lowered *pari passu* with political co-operation. It is only within a group based on surely founded co-operation over the whole field of political life that far-reaching economic concessions can be expected or can have themselves any sure foundation. That raises issues which more properly belong to Chapter Five.

My second point concerns national policies. Within each country there is a need of new social and economic policies designed to increase consumption and raise standards of living. The unhappy symptoms which characterised the years between the two wars, the maladjustments between potential productive capacity and effective consuming power — sometimes graphically, though essentially inaccurately, described as "poverty in the midst of plenty" [1] — the violent fluctuations in prices

[1] Inaccurately, because in fact productive power in its present stage of actual development falls very far short of being sufficient to provide an adequate standard of living for all the human race.

and economic activity, the haunting spectre of unemployment, have aroused men's consciousness to the defects in the existing system and impressed even on moderate and conservative minds the conviction that individualistic productive enterprise driven *solely* by the profit-making motive has failed to meet men's social needs and even to provide a solution for its own problems. To meet maladjustments between production and consumption by restricting production in order to retain profit margins is seen to be broadly contrary to public interest, and there is a growing appreciation of the need for giving greater attention to the consumers' side, for raising purchasing power and the standard of living of the masses ; for considering the *distribution* of wealth as a paramount consideration of equal importance with its *production*.

This second point leads back again to the first. National economic policies and international economic co-operation interact. For, if a state desires to raise standards of living and increase consumption among its own people by such measures, for example, as the enforcement of higher wages, subsidies for housing and nutrition, or social services generally, it may find its scope for such action limited by the fact that these measures will tend to raise its own internal costs of production and thereby create difficulties for the export of its products in competitive markets. The dangers of this kind of reaction, even though they often tend to be exaggerated by sectional interests, are nevertheless a very real factor and point back again to the need for international economic co-operation. For if the potentially competing countries agree together to observe equal standards [1] in these matters, then the narrow-

[1] This is a broad statement of an ideal. I am not blind to the practical difficulties, nor to the fact that literal interpretation of such an ideal in practice may be a long way off. The expression 'equal standards', for example, cannot at once be literally interpreted. Obviously in present Indian conditions it would be impossible now to observe standards for wages and conditions of employment 'equal' to those of a country like the United States. Again, the idea of levelling up international standards may seem chimerical to those whose experiences of the discussions at Geneva on the eight-hour day, for example, have revealed the immense difficulties

ing fear of competitive disadvantages will be eliminated and a much greater advance on a wide front made possible.

The keynote of these observations is that the great need now among all nations is to concentrate on raising standards of consumption, to consider the distribution of wealth concurrently with production,[1] to abandon ideas of national aggrandisement, to turn from wars of arms against each other and to join together as members of a Grand Alliance in a war against poverty and low standards of living in the broadest sense. These conceptions reflect indeed in the economic field the essential principle in defence of which the Democracies are arrayed against the Totalitarian Powers — the principle that the welfare of individuals is of more importance than the power of states.

India cannot remain aloof from these questions. Her problems are essentially the same problems, while she must be profoundly affected by the solutions adopted in other countries. The world needs her as a powerful member of the 'Alliance' of which I have spoken, and, while she has much to learn herself from the past experience and experiments of other countries, she too, if she takes advantage of her opportunities, can have much to teach.

not only of arriving at agreements but of securing anything like uniformity in their interpretation. But a recognition of the practical difficulties does not necessitate an abandonment of the ideal. It may have to be worked up to gradually; some sort of relative 'parity' may have to be accepted at first instead of exact equality; and political co-operation will, as has already been recognised, be an indispensable condition for an effective economic 'alliance'. But I remain convinced that it is on these lines that the way to true progress in human affairs will be found.

[1] As is pointed out later, the development to the maximum of production remains of course of paramount importance. There is need for far higher standards of production before there can be anything like 'plenty' in the world. It has not, therefore, hitherto been fully true to talk about "poverty in the midst of plenty". But it has been true to say that even the insufficient volume of goods which the world has been actually developed to produce has proved in many cases to be a glut because there has not been a balancing distribution of purchasing power.

2. The Conditions for Economic Progress in India

What then are the conditions on which the framers of Indian policy have to work, the underlying economic conditions as created by nature and affected by past policy, and the conditions of public opinion which no practical statesman can ignore? What methods and machinery can be best devised to make policy effective? How do all these questions react on the constitutional problem? These are the main questions which in this chapter I shall attempt to review.

India's great Opportunity

The impression that stands out above all others in my mind on a broad survey of the Indian position is the immense opportunity presented to national governments [1] taking over the direction of economic policy to-day. No country has a clearer field in which to develop its economic destiny by its own independent efforts. To say this is not to weaken the force of what I have just said about the importance of international economic co-operation and the extent to which India will be affected by conditions in the surrounding world. She could not indeed lose her outside markets for the exportable surplus of her special products, such as jute, cotton, oilseeds, tea, hides, etc., without bringing grave distress on a great proportion of her people, since, though the quantities exported only represent a small percentage in value of her total products, the opportunity to sell these quantities for money gives just that margin which makes all the difference to vast masses of the agricultural population. These masses too

[1] Throughout this chapter I use the expression ' national governments '. The greater part of the matters touched upon are such as to come within the purview of the Provinces and States rather than of the Central Government. This distinction becomes of greater importance when the constitutional position is under discussion ; but for the present I am concerned only with the general position of governments, provincial or central, in the hands of national Indian ministries.

are seriously affected by the world price levels for their products, both the absolute levels which affect their power to meet their money obligations and the relative levels as compared with those prevailing for the manufactured articles which they have to buy in exchange. Clearly therefore India cannot insulate herself entirely from world conditions.[1] But — and this is the essential point which cannot be emphasised too strongly — for any further building up of production and standards of living, it is to internal development that she must mainly look and from which she derives an opportunity for which there is no parallel. She has in fact at her disposal within her own boundaries the most extensive potential area for free trading in the world.[2] Throughout this area run long-established traditions of tranquillity, respect for state authority, orderly and conscientious administration, and the rule of law. The system of public finance is sound, and there are no heavy burdens of unproductive public debt. The system of communications is fairly well developed and the railways and postal services are efficiently run. Natural conditions are on the whole favourable to wide development. There are large[3]

[1] India is, however, even in this respect far better placed than most countries which rely on primary agricultural products as their main exports. India has never been preponderantly dependent on a single crop (as the Malay States for rubber, the Dutch East Indies or the West Indies for sugar). Even in the worst periods of the world depression of 1930–33 there was never any piling up of unmanageable stocks of unsalable agricultural products and no drastic crop restriction schemes were necessary. Indian agriculture throughout these years showed itself to be remarkably adaptable. (Some instructive figures were given on these points in my Budget Speeches in 1933 and 1934.)

[2] Comparable areas for development by a single state might be said to exist in the United States, China, and Soviet Russia. But the United States has a population only about one-third of that of India, while China, apart from lacking the same natural resources, is crippled by internal disturbance and threats from hostile powers. It is of course clear that India's field is at present a *potential* field only. If the greatness of a market is measured by its real purchasing power, India's four hundred millions are at present still a relatively small market. But the potentiality — the opportunity — is there.

[3] India's coal reserves are large, though not on the scale of those in some other leading industrial countries. The Coal Mining Committee of

reserves of iron ore and coal in close juxtaposition and many other mineral resources. If the soil is not everywhere good and if climatic conditions in their extreme vicissitudes sometimes bring difficulties and disasters, there are nevertheless many counterbalancing favourable factors such as unique suitability for certain crops and natural conditions which have made possible some of the greatest irrigation developments in the world. Moreover, by proper methods of cultivation and animal husbandry an immense increase could be achieved in agricultural production. The development of these resources hitherto, though doubtless falling far short of perfection in many ways, both in speed and comprehensiveness, has nevertheless on the whole been on sound lines. There are no hidden weaknesses,[1] no unsound or artificial props to impair the strength of the general structure. Against these assets, actual or potential, must be set the liability of a crowding and fast-growing population characterised by a very low standard of living. But this condition, in the very margin for improvement that it reveals, not only indicates a clear objective for future policy, but serves to enhance the greatness of the opportunity for constructive statesmanship.

A great opportunity to write a story of progressive development and a clean sheet on which to write it ; these are the high lights in the picture as I see it.

To say this is not to imply that the past record has been free of errors and shortcomings — indeed the 'liability' side of the balance-sheet points to some of

1937 estimated the life of coking coal reserves in India at 62 years, and of non-coking coal at 99 years. Great Britain's coal is estimated to last between 400 and 500 years, France's 400 years, and Germany's 600 years.

[1] I do not suggest that there are no weaknesses. The caste system, for example, may be described as a weakness, or the uneven distribution of wealth as between cities like Calcutta or Bombay and the general countryside. But there are no hidden economic weaknesses, such as artificially supported crop-production schemes, or artificial and precarious industrial growths on a large scale. Perhaps the sugar industry might have been so regarded ; but that has hardly been on a scale large enough to affect the national economy, and is, moreover, gradually straightening itself out.

these. Nor does it mean that the future task will be easy, since that will require the highest qualities of inspiring leadership and constructive administration. To consider what this task involves, what the 'liability' means, and in what way it may be discharged, will be the main object of the next sections of this chapter.

No one who is familiar with contemporary Indian thought can imagine that the appreciation which I have given will pass without challenge. Indeed in many ways it is in direct contradiction to most of what is being said and written in India to-day.[1] But I am convinced of its substantial truth, and I have deliberately stated my appreciation in a challenging form because I believe it is above all important to face fairly and squarely the issues which it raises.

3. An Economic Policy for India

The Primary Need to increase Productivity of Labour

What then should be the lines of India's future economic policy?

It is necessary to start with some elementary observations. The only way to improve the general level of material prosperity for mankind is to increase the effective output of those who are employed in production. There is no escape from this simple truth. It is of course possible to advance the level for a particular group of producers if the price of their own product is increased relatively to the prices of other commodities, or again to benefit a particular class if that class is given a greater share of the total proceeds of the industry in which they are engaged (*e.g.* manual workers in relation to administrative staff or proprietors). There may indeed be a good case and

[1] The high lights in the picture of the Indian scene are brought out if that scene is contrasted with the present position in the comparable country of China. A picture of China may perhaps help to balance pessimism in India and induce Indians reflecting on their own country's position to "count their blessings".

opportunities for relative improvements of this kind in India. Thus manual labour as a whole may not be getting a large enough share of the national dividend and too much may be going to the administrative direction (*e.g.* directors, managing agents, etc.), or to the providers of capital (moneylenders, bankers, or shareholders and debenture holders), or in taxes to cover the costs of administration and defence. Or again, Indian producers may be getting too low a price for the goods which they export in relation to the price which they have to pay for imports. These are at least arguable points. *But* no relative change of this kind could have a major effect on the Indian situation, and it is safe to say that for any appreciable advance in the standard of living of the Indian masses there is only one method, and that is to increase the productivity of their labour. If the whole of the profits of 'big business' in industry (taking the average profits for the last ten years of the registered companies engaged in cotton mills, jute mills, tea-planting, coal-mining, and the manufacture of iron and steel, sugar, cement, and paper) were divided equally among the whole of the Indian people, that would only give them an extra 3 annas per head per year (about 3½d.).[1] If the whole of the peace-time cost of the army and the whole net annual charge of the Indian national debt were remitted and a corresponding sum divided among the people equally, that would only give them about 1¼ rupees (about 1s. 10½d.) per head per annum. If the value of all India's exports (taking the figures for the last year before the war) were increased by 25 per cent and there were no corresponding rise in the cost of India's imports, the net benefit to the Indian people would only amount to 1 rupee (1s. 6d.) per head per annum.

These simple figures are enough to illustrate the argument. The conclusion is that the first essential point in any national economic programme must be to concentrate

[1] This, and the subsequent figures, have been worked out on the basis of a population of 400 millions. The preliminary census returns for 1941 confirm this figure.

on increasing the productivity of labour. That must be the starting-point of every plan. This is a very elementary statement but it is astonishing how often it is forgotten.

The Balance of Production

The next question is in what fields is the increase of production to be sought? How, for example, is it to be distributed between agriculture and manufacturing industry? These questions must be studied objectively in a scientific spirit and above all with an appreciation of the point which I have already stressed — that the essential objective of economic policy in India should be the increase of individual well-being among the masses of the people.

It is necessary therefore to start with a picture of how the people are employed. Precise exactitude is not possible since the census returns are not exactly reliable in this respect. One may give a broad picture by saying that of India's population of 352 millions at the last census only 11 per cent were classed as urban, the balance of 89 per cent being rural, living in 700,000 villages with an average population of 450. As regards occupations the census returns for 1931 [1] show the following as the distribution of actual workers: 10 per cent Industrial, $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent Trade, $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent Transport, $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent Public Administration and Liberal Arts, $13\frac{1}{2}$ per cent Miscellaneous, and lastly, $67\frac{1}{2}$ per cent engaged in the production of raw materials of which total all except a very small fraction are engaged in Pasture and Agriculture.

The Key Importance of Agriculture

It is clear from these figures that improvements of conditions which do not spread to the rural population will only benefit a minor proportion of the Indian masses. On the ground of size alone their condition deserves chief

[1] The figures given cannot be regarded as more than approximations. The ordinary census machinery has not been fully accurate or adequate for collecting statistics of this kind.

consideration. But the reasons go deeper than this. Anything more than a superficial examination of the position must lead to the conclusion that by industrial development *alone* it will be impossible to lift the whole level of Indian standards adequately and, indeed, that there can be no sure foundation for industrial progress itself unless the condition and purchasing power of the agricultural population are concurrently improved. This is true not of India alone but of the whole world, and the economic troubles of the pre-war years were gradually bringing home the lesson that agriculture is the foundation of the world's economic structure. In only eight countries before the war [1] was the number of persons engaged in agriculture and fishing less than those engaged in manufacturing and extractive industries. Russia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, China (over 80 per cent), Poland (76 per cent), and several other countries in Europe all showed higher percentages of the population classed as agricultural than India (67½ per cent). When the time comes to concert a world economic policy after the war and devise plans to avoid the problems of the pre-war years on the lines which I have already sketched, the only safe starting-point will be to take the position of agricultural producers. What do *they* need for their prosperity? How can *they* combine a maximum output with reasonable prosperity for themselves? It is on these foundations that industrialists must build their own structure. And moreover it is on these foundations too that wage-earners in manufacturing industry can hope to raise their own standards of living, by being enabled to acquire a sufficient quantity of the right kinds of food and other agricultural products in return for a reasonable portion of the products of their own labour.

A recently published book, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, by Colin Clark (London: Macmillan, 1940),

[1] The United States, Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand. All the figures given here are taken from *World Wheat Planning*, p. 9 (P. de Hevesey, 1940).

throws an interesting light on this matter and deserves serious study in India. After establishing beyond doubt that " the world is found to be a wretchedly poor place ", Mr. Clark goes on to demonstrate that poverty is closely associated with low productivity per head in agriculture. He then produces some calculations which reveal most astonishing variations between different countries in this respect. In New Zealand 6·4 per cent of the total labour force would be sufficient to secure an optimum diet to the whole population — provided that dairy products could be exchanged for cereals on the terms prevailing in 1925–1934 — whereas the Russian population would only get an optimum diet if 200 per cent of the working population were employed in agriculture, assuming that the present productivity per head remains the same !

These conclusions strongly reinforce the argument of the present chapter which is that although there are immense openings for industrial expansion in India, this can only bring its full benefit to the masses of the people if based on the foundation of improvement in the productivity of the agricultural population.

It is worth while to call attention to conditions affecting other countries so as to counteract any suggestion that one who preaches the importance of Indian agriculture is suggesting that Indians in particular should be condemned to a derogatory role as mere " hewers of wood and drawers of water ". This idea of agriculture as something less dignified and more backward than ' industry ' is in any case a curious one because in fact agriculture is itself an ' industry ', and moreover one which on the average may well be regarded as offering a more dignified and worthy human existence than the deadening repetitive tasks in mills and factories.

But while the importance of agriculture to India is comparable to that which it has for the surrounding world, there are certain features in the Indian situation which make her needs for agricultural advance specially urgent, and her opportunity for achieving it specially straight-

forward. For many other countries increase in their agricultural production is blocked by the difficulties of disposing of the product until the world opens out new outlets for increased consumption on the lines which I have sketched in the opening section of this chapter. An increase of the production of Canadian, Australian, or Argentine wheat, Brazilian coffee, Argentine meat, Malayan rubber, Cuban or Dutch East Indian sugar, is blocked in its outlet by world difficulties ; but for India to increase her agricultural production for the benefit of her own people there is immense scope and room for many years' progress before her actions will impinge on the world situation. This is one aspect of India's special opportunity which I have already stressed.

The Foundations for increasing Production and raising Standards of Living

What does all this mean in terms of concrete policy? How is agricultural productivity to be increased ?

When these questions are put, one enters in India into a realm of controversy, and it is common to be told that there is no hope of improvement except by the removal of causes which lie outside the field of agriculture. Some will say that the population is already overcrowding the land and that the only way to raise standards is to find employment for a much greater proportion in manufacturing industry. Others will say that no progress is possible without a radical change in the system of land tenure. Others again may point to the burden of agricultural indebtedness and assert that with this burden pressing on him the Indian ryot knows that he can never lift himself above the level of bare subsistence and therefore that he will not make the effort to improve his methods. All these (and the list is by no means exhaustive) are serious points which moreover have a bearing on the general political situation and therefore deserve examination. But it will be best first to sketch the outlines of an agricultural policy and then

consider whether there is anything in any of these considerations to prevent its fulfilment.

Better Nutrition a Primary Need

There is common agreement that the masses of the Indian people are undernourished. It must follow that unless this condition can be corrected they cannot be set on the road to improve their lot. To improve nutrition must therefore be the first step in any general plan for increasing productive power and improving standards of living.

The basic foundation for any practical policy aiming at this objective must be scientific knowledge — knowledge of the composition and digestibility of Indian foodstuffs and of the nutritional requirements of an Asiatic population living under tropical conditions. Knowledge on these matters has been greatly extended by recent scientific study,[1] and though it is of course by no means complete, it has gone far enough to indicate broad lines of action, so that the emphasis may rather be placed now on the need for converting knowledge into an effective policy. The outlines of a policy may be roughly sketched as follows. The scientific evidence indicates that the Indian dietary is more deficient in quality than in quantity, but it will be safe to assume that increased quantities of all crops are desirable. To provide a well-balanced nutritional diet there is need to consume more pulses, vegetables, fruits, fats, and milk. There is, moreover, room for improvement not only in the composition of the foodstuffs produced but also in methods of treatment after production.

[1] I refer particularly to the work of the Director of Nutrition Research in India (Dr. Aykroyd) and to the latest scientific review of Indian agriculture by Sir John Russell, the Director of the Rothamsted Experimental Station, and Dr. Norman Wright, Director of the Hannah Dairy Research Institute, Kirkhill, Ayr. The Nutrition Research Laboratories at Coonoor in South India under Dr. Aykroyd are acknowledged as being among the best equipped and most active establishments of their kind. They were founded in 1918 by Sir Robert McCarrison.

In order to illustrate the practical significance of these statements two examples may be given. As regards treatment, there is the case of rice which is the staple food of over half the population of India. Here it has been established that milling in machine mills, a comparatively recent development, seriously reduces the nutritional value of rice. The prevalence of beri-beri in certain parts of India is directly attributed to the increased use of highly milled rice. Turning to the balance of products which is needed, one may take the case of milk. Of milk there is at present available 7 to 8 oz. per head per day.[1] Standard European requirements are put at 35 oz. Thus even if India aims at no more than 15 oz. this would mean doubling the output of milk, while to approach European standards would mean a fourfold increase.

No calculations are available to show precisely what the total effect of such changes in diet as have been indicated would be on the crops to be grown and the amount of land required. But it is safe to assume that the general effect would be to make greater demands on the land. There may still be some room for the extension of the area of cultivation in India, but in the main the greater demand must be met by applying better methods to land already in cultivation combined with better methods of animal husbandry.[2] As an example of what can be done, it may be noted that improved strains

[1] To meet possible criticism it must again be pointed out that wide generalisations about India cannot escape inaccuracy. Conditions as regards milk consumption, for example, are different in parts of the Punjab from the general average of India.

[2] The Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture in 1927 summed up the chief factors capable of improving yields of crops in India under seven heads: better varieties of crops, better control of pests and diseases, better control of water supply for crops, the prevention of soil erosion, better use of manures and fertilisers, better implements and cultivation, and better systems of cropping — in particular better rotations and the use of more fodder crops with the object of obtaining more farmyard manure. (Cf. an interesting paper by Sir Frank Noyce read at a Conference of the Royal Empire Society, November 1937, on which I have drawn largely in this survey of agriculture.) There is still much room for improvement under these heads.

of cotton, sugar-cane, and jute recently introduced have shown increases of 10 to 15 per cent over the average previous yields. One safe line of advance for India, therefore, would be by the use of such improved strains and other methods to produce the same yield of cash crops off a reduced acreage, and to use the land thus released for growing more and better kinds of food and animal fodder crops. In that way, without reducing their cash return and without having to find outlets for increased quantities of cash crops, the cultivators would have an ampler and better diet for themselves, more to trade with among each other, and more to sell to those employed in manufacturing industry, thereby creating purchasing power and outlet for increased Indian manufactures. There is therefore great scope for raising standards of living merely by the improvement of agriculture — and moreover such an improvement in the agriculturalists' production and purchasing power is necessary if an extended Indian industry is to find outlets for its products — and this is a point to be remembered when we come to consider industrial expansion.

The Alleged Fetters on Progress: the Overriding Importance of Human Character and Physique

But it is not enough to demonstrate that there is opportunity and scope for improvement. It is necessary to ensure that the opportunity is taken. How to do that is a more practical and more difficult question. It is in answer to that question that the effects of the land laws or rural indebtedness and other hampering fetters are put forward, and it is argued that these must be struck off before there can be any advance for the Indian ryot. But is not the truth rather that the cause must be sought in the man himself — that until he is given a healthier and stronger physique, a changed outlook on life, and a broader education, the strength and urge to get out of his present rut of low standards will be lacking? That is why it is valuable to start with the objective of dietary

improvement just mentioned, for undoubtedly one of the main causes for present low production is the physical condition of the people resulting from permanent malnutrition.[1] Other measures for the improvement of health — such as the combating of malaria — will be valuable, and beyond this more valuable still and a more primary necessity will be a broadening education. But this is jumping forward to the final conclusion. Let us examine some of the so-called ' fetters '.

Land Laws

There is a school of thought (led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Marxian students) which ascribes all the trouble to the existing system of land tenure, and which asserts that any remedies which do not abolish landlords and existing land laws can do no more than tinker with the situation. It may well be true that in many places the landlords in India have not lived up to their full responsibilities and as a class have failed to give the helpful supervision which would provide the only sure justification for their existence. But the theory that mass reform of land tenure would provide a cure for all ills will not stand the test of close examination. In a great part of India — almost certainly the larger part of the whole — the land is cultivated not by tenants but by small freeholders. These areas do not present any convincing demonstration of totally different results. To check the exact effects of systems of land tenure would require a most careful comparative survey of conditions in all parts of India. It is a common feature of writings on agriculture to underestimate the effects on the character and physical attributes of the people. Yet as affecting agricultural results throughout the world no factor is of more dominating importance than this. English writers, for example, often make comparisons between British and Danish agriculture and appeal for Government assistance of all kinds in order to help British

[1] There is considerable prevalence of deficiency diseases in India — keratomalacia, beri-beri, anaemia, rickets, osteomalacia, etc., etc.

agriculture to equal Danish results. But a closer examination of conditions reveals that the Danish results have only been made possible by the unremitting hard work and thrift of the Danish farmers small and large. Danish, Belgian, and French peasant farmers accept standards which generally are never reproduced in England, and it is useless to blame external factors in England for the failure of English agriculture to produce similar results. It is possible within India itself to make similar comparisons, and to find cases where differences in human character have proved a more important factor than the most striking differences in agricultural conditions. In the Punjab, for example, cultivators on the new irrigation areas enjoying unexampled opportunities of prosperity have in many cases shown signs of demoralisation from these easy conditions — attempted a standard of living which they could not support, incurred heavy debts and then been thrown into financial ruin by a sudden collapse in prices — while in other districts cultivators, hardened by the necessity of competing with more adverse conditions, have maintained themselves free of debt and proved invulnerable to booms and slumps with their vicissitudes of prices.[1]

Rural Indebtedness

This line of thought leads naturally to the consideration of another condition which is often represented as the key source of troubles in India — agricultural indebtedness. That is indeed another factor which has contributed to the vicious circle in which the Indian peasant moves. The heavy burden of debt undoubtedly tends to keep him down to a bare level of subsistence because he feels that,

[1] Sir Malcolm Darling's books on Indian peasant life bring out this point. He has found, for example, in irrigation colonies two villages side by side exhibiting great differences, simply because there was a frugal community in the one and a lazy one in the other. The Ahirs of the Rewari tahsil (near Delhi) are an excellent example of a tribe that does well and keeps out of debt, through sheer industry, under the most difficult soil conditions.

if his efforts raise him above this, the difference is wholly absorbed by the moneylender. Indeed it has often seemed to me true to say that the moneylenders as a class are really the owners of the 'equity' of Indian agriculture, leaving the agriculturalist in the position of a worker for a fixed return — the minimum necessary to keep body and soul together. This explains how a class which even in times of good crops and high prices appears to have no margin over a low level of subsistence yet managed to get through the terrible depression of 1929–33 without acute disaster. It is true that much was done during those years in the way of rent and revenue remission and reduction of mortgage interest; but that was not enough to account for all that happened. It seems clear that so far as the village moneylender is concerned there is a normal practice of give and take. He in fact allows his debtors to retain the bare minimum necessary for their existence so that they can live through the bad years, but when times are good they pay the cost, for they have to yield almost all the surplus over the same bare level.[1]

Like all generalisations about India this is not universally true, but it is an important and a true touch in the general picture, and it is of fundamental importance to an understanding of the Indian situation. It is necessary, however, to go deeper than this and to examine how the debts first come to be incurred. And this brings us back again to the overriding importance of character and education. It would be of no avail for a benevolent superior authority by some wide plan for redemption of debts to extricate the rural masses from their condition, unless at the same time something were done to change the habits or mental attitude which got them into it. For it seems to be a widely spread characteristic of the Indian peasant to get into debt at once to the full limit of his credit. If conditions are improved by irrigation schemes or otherwise, that means an improvement in

[1] This is borne out by a saying which runs in the Punjab, "In good times the moneylender eats us. In bad times we eat him."

his credit and he borrows more, and the essence of the evil is that he borrows for no useful purpose. It is generally for funeral or marriage ceremonies or for external extravagances which do not increase his earning power.

Taxation

The conditions and characteristics thus described have a bearing also on another point often made : that heavy burdens of taxation or the system of land revenue are keeping down standards of living and cultivation. As a matter of fact the actual burden of taxation per head in India has been very low, being about 8s. per head, which may be compared with a figure of about £3 per head for Japan.[1] A total remission of taxation, therefore, would only make a small difference.[2] But even if a large difference could be made in this way, so that the income available to the peasant for his own consumption or for improving his methods of cultivation were substantially increased, there can be no assurance that in present circumstances that increase would in the long run appreciably raise his standards, and not merely be used as a basis for further borrowing and thus increase the yearly toll paid to the moneylender on account of debt incurred for quite unproductive purposes.

Over-population

There is yet one more point that should be considered in this survey — the relentless pressure of increasing population. That may well be regarded as the most important of all among the factors contributing to keep the peasantry

[1] These comparisons of taxation per head in different countries are notoriously difficult, and can only be taken as giving a very rough guide. These figures are taken from 'The Science of Public Finance' (Findlay Shirras), but they cover different years for the two countries.

[2] Cf. Sir Malcolm Darling's Report on the Land Revenue System of the Punjab for 1938, in which he shows how very little is the effect of land revenue on the peasant's budget.

down in a vicious circle. The population of India is apparently increasing at the rate of more than 6 millions yearly. The existing pressure on the land is a well-known factor. How, it is asked, if population increases at this rate, can standards of living ever be improved? Is it not a Sisyphean task, unless a totally new outlet in industrial employment can be found? This is indeed a question fundamentally affecting the future of India; but at this stage I wish to consider it in a limited aspect only. The causes of the growth and decline of populations are in many ways mysterious; but there is some ground for the conclusion that human motives for reducing growth do not begin to operate until people have risen above a certain minimum standard of living and education. Extreme poverty does not appear to operate as a check on the creation of families, possibly because men who are already at the lowest possible level do not fear to fall lower. It is only when a certain standard has been attained that they come under the influence of a desire to protect that standard, which may express itself in a tendency to have smaller families. If this is true it reinforces the conclusion that the great need is to lift the Indian rural population out of its present rut not only by improving its material standards but by a broadening education.

Historical Influences

The foregoing considerations seem to combine in pointing to the conclusion that the character and mental outlook of the Indian peasantry lie at the root of the whole problem. The task, therefore, is to deal with a very deep-seated condition which needs to be truly understood and rightly treated before any real improvement in the situation can be achieved. Some may diagnose that condition as resulting originally from influences of long-past history on the Indian peasant mind. He lived for so many centuries under despotic governments, the chief visible symptom of which was the tax-gatherer — and a tax-gatherer ready to take all he had over the bare minimum of subsistence.

Therefore there was little incentive to produce more than the bare minimum, and still less to use any surplus, if produced, in thrifty investments designed to improve the value of his holding. If he did save anything it had to be buried in the floor of his hut. He either remained utterly poor or had to adopt the protective colouring of poverty to an extent which made fruitful investment impossible.

Religious Outlook

Others may see in this attitude to material improvement a reflection of the traditional religious outlook in India. To quote from a recent economic survey by an Indian writer : [1]

> . . . to the Hindu this world is unreal. It is only a means to an end. The end is exoneration from the punishment of rebirth. He is in this world because of his sins in the past birth. Thus being ushered into our silly globe by the judgment of the Almighty, but much against his own will, his acts here are aimed at mitigating the sins he has committed at some other time that he is not aware of but which are obvious. If any surplus of ' good ' acts is left over after the complete mitigation of his past sins it will serve to secure him the most coveted privilege — a permanent seat in heaven. This attitude belongs not to the masses only, but to the middle, upper and educated classes as well.

It can hardly be doubted that such an outlook may militate against efforts at the improvement of worldly conditions. Let me add, to avoid misunderstanding, that it is very far from my intention to advocate policies which would draw India towards an exaggeration of materialistic values. But that would not be a necessary result of improving material standards to a level of reasonable well-being in this world.

[1] I have purposely chosen to give a short summary by quoting from an Indian writer. The passage comes from a recent Marxian study of Indian economics, *The Structural Basis of Indian Economy*, by H. Venkatasubbiah.

Climatic Conditions

Others may see in climatic conditions a factor affecting energy and enterprise. That again is true, as differences between the achievements of cultivators within India itself can be brought forward to demonstrate. All that can be said on this is that the effect of climatic conditions can be to some extent offset by the use of a diet suitable to the climate, and that the results of other measures proposed in this chapter, while they may not overcome the relative disadvantages of certain areas, may yet substantially raise the level for the whole.

Comparisons with other Countries

In considering the characteristics thus described it is also interesting to enquire whether they are peculiar to India. There are indeed certain features in the character and behaviour of the Indian rural masses which can be observed elsewhere. Experience in other countries with a backward rural population indicates a tendency to be satisfied with a bare minimum of subsistence and to utilise any margin above this, if it is available, not for establishing a higher standard of life, but rather for useless extravagance or for buying useless leisure by getting the real work done by a hired worker. The result is that the people working on the land are always living at a bare minimum. If that is really the inevitable result, then it is better for the state to take the surplus in taxation and spend it wisely on education and agricultural improvements in the hope of gradually raising the workers to a level, mentally as well as physically, which will so affect their outlook and capacity as to make them active agents of their own progress.

Education in the Widest Sense the Real Need

I have dwelt at some length on these matters because it seems to me that they are of fundamental importance

for a true understanding of the Indian situation; that they have a bearing on both economic and political problems, and lastly that they throw a striking and clarifying light on the difficulties and opportunities for national Indian governments. The conclusion to which they point is that for any real improvement in the position — any improvement which will be lasting or worth having — it is of no avail to look solely to such measures as the reform of land tenure, the cancellation of rural indebtedness, the reduction of taxation, plans for diminution of pressure on the land (either by controlling population or drawing off peasants into industry — of which more hereafter), or even to measures for directly increasing the cultivators' earning power, such as irrigation schemes, supply of manures, implements, etc. None of these things will really help unless the cultivators have the physical energy and urge to take advantage of their opportunities and, above all, the education which will suffice not only to make them understand what they are doing and so do it better, but also give them ideas how properly to use the extra wealth which they may earn. To nutrition, therefore, and education must be attached the greatest importance. And, for this purpose, education must be not merely such as may help a man to earn more money, but such as will also give him the understanding to find a wider and better meaning and purpose in life.[1]

[1] As a personal expression based on experience in Africa as well as India, I must add the opinion that to take advantage of scientific knowledge and natural conditions so as to bring, by the sudden introduction of some new system, opportunities to an uneducated rural population for earning wealth at a level to which the people are not adapted is not merely to squander a great opportunity, but may bring positive harm, *unless* special steps have been concurrently taken to bring about a corresponding advance on the intellectual and spiritual side. It should be regarded as an essential duty on the part of a government which brings opportunities of greatly increased wealth to an uneducated people to ensure that such wealth is not a demoralising influence. Perhaps it may seem somewhat absurd to talk of this kind of condition in India where, as has just been emphasised, there is such widespread poverty. But there have been many cases in recent times in India of sudden accretions of earning power in the newly irrigated districts. In Africa there have been perhaps more examples of striking changes. To perform this duty adequately is not easy for an alien govern-

4. The Execution of a Rural Programme

A great National Drive needed

It is at this point that the special tasks and opportunities for national governments in India become clear. To organise the broad educational drive which will be necessary for any real and lasting improvement in the condition of the rural masses, to inspire the enthusiasm and devoted service by which such a movement alone can succeed, represent tasks in which they will have clear advantages over a British bureaucracy. As a personal expression of faith, it is on grounds of this kind that my own deep desire to see national self-government successfully established in India is based. It is in matters of this kind — and not in the subjects of the usual charges and criticisms — that the real limitations of the British administration are to be found. However qualified that administration may have been to adhere with rigidity and conscientiousness to principles of sound government, it must be less fitted than national Indian ministries to lead a great propagandist movement in India. And that is what is needed.

The National Service required

The question will at once be asked how is such a movement to be organised. It will require thousands of well-trained men. It must be costly. How is the burden of finance to be borne ? My answer is that if the heart of India is in such a movement there need be no difficulty about finance. It must be carried on as a crusade by men who will be satisfied to live simply and to get their reward mainly in the satisfaction of doing a service. Much of what is required must be supplied by the villagers

ment. Among the very primitive peoples of Africa it is less difficult for such a government to assume a paternal role than in India, where, although the masses lack education, they have a long-established stratified society. Certainly British governments in Africa have tended to do more (though not, I think, enough) than the British Government in India with its traditions of non-interference. Here is one of the great opportunities for national Indian governments.

themselves on a co-operative basis. Adequate houses can be built with local labour, food and other simple needs can be supplied in kind. Little money need pass. Of course, if it were necessary to create a great administrative service, of the regular government pattern, with all the paraphernalia of prescribed scales of pay, annual increments, travelling and detention allowances, etc., then indeed the money cost might prove overwhelming. But I visualise something quite different, something like a wide national service, with every young man who passes through an Indian university bound as part of his university studies to acquire the knowledge necessary to impart suitable village education, and under an obligation after taking his degree to serve for two or perhaps three years as a rural teacher. In many other countries a period of two years' compulsory military service for all has been accepted without question. Let it be hoped that India may escape the need of such a universal burden and may adopt instead, for all who do not join the armed forces, national service in an army of a different kind, an army enlisted to fight ignorance, apathy, improvidence, disease, or other human evils, which will enable India to take her place as an important member of that Grand Alliance of which I have written in the first section of this chapter.

Such a service as I have visualised would of course require an inner cadre of permanent teachers and administrators and for these it would afford a life's career. This nucleus would need to have reasonable standards of remuneration ; but the greater proportion of the service could be rendered by young men for whom it would only be an incident in their normal careers.

The picture which I have sketched is perhaps visionary, and one must recognise that there may be many practical difficulties. But I believe that with the right spirit these could be overcome. It is by casting off pessimistic and barren reflections on past grievances and present difficulties, and by looking forward in a spirit of generous optimism to the widely expanding and fruitful openings

of the future, that India can find her salvation.

But optimism can be no substitute for the intellectual effort and practical experience which are necessary for effectively organising a social service on the lines which I have sketched. Both the training and selection of the 'teachers' and the methods and curriculum for 'teaching' need careful planning. Together with devotion, optimism, and intellectual work of the highest quality must be blended the quality of patience. For there can be no quick or spectacular results. A deep and abiding faith is needed which will sustain the effort in spite of disappointments and without the encouragement of contemporary applause.

Experiment and Research required to establish Methods

A plan cannot be made *a priori* ; the experimental method is needed, and the organisation of social services calls for research no less thorough or critical than is found in a scientific laboratory. Something can be learned from the experience of other countries, and this should be studied ; but in the main India will have to work out her own plans in adaptation to her own very special circumstances. A good deal has indeed already been done, and there are to be found, throughout India a number of 'model' villages or estates in which a variety of devices for improving the lot of the peasant are on trial. Most of these centres are under the aegis of missions or of universities, though one of the most interesting is to be found in the neighbourhood of Delhi, and is due to the enterprise of an exceptionally energetic Chief Commissioner. But though of great value these experiments have hitherto been too haphazard to yield the results which could properly be expected from them. There is no central organisation of their enquiries,[1] no adequate common plan or arrange-

[1] It should be noted here that a society for the study of Agricultural Economics has been started in India, and last year held its first formal session. The objects of this society are almost precisely those stated in the text ; but such a society can hardly have the authority which is necessary for wide practical results.

ment for exchanging the knowledge they acquire, nor are the departments of government always fully apprised of their results. In this laboratory of rural research there is not sufficient contact between the different workers, enquiries are duplicated, the staff is of uneven quality, and there is room for improvement in the publication of its reports.

Government Leadership needed : the Co-operative Movement

Much could be accomplished if Indian National governments were to undertake the supervision and active encouragement of this work so as to get all the disjointed efforts knit together in a wide movement. In such a movement the co-operative organisations must play an important part. In fact the co-operative idea, properly interpreted, is essentially the right idea for Indian conditions, and could be of outstanding importance in the development of India's rural economy. Although some of the existing experiments have been based on the co-operative system, it is broadly true to say that hitherto — except in the Punjab — the generally accepted application of the co-operative idea has tended to be limited to co-operative credit — a narrow and not necessarily very fruitful function. Co-operative marketing, co-operative purchasing, and possibly co-operative working of wide areas of land are extensions which need to be more widely tried out.

Two Important Connected Issues

At this point it may be convenient to make a digression to consider two matters of the highest importance which, while they have a close connection with rural development, have also a far wider significance.

An Opportunity for the Educated Unemployed

One of the main evils in the present Indian situation is that of educated unemployment — the mass of young men who pass through the universities and are then

unable to find a congenial opening and career. This constitutes one of the greatest dangers to the body politic. A proper development of the social services in India including the service of rural education and rural development might do much to provide an outlet. Even if a large permanent staff is not built up, the two years' service which I have suggested, combined with the greater interest which would be taken in rural life, might induce large numbers of these young men to find useful careers in country life.

The Danger of Parasite Services

That is the first point and it leads naturally to the second. As has already been suggested, the plan which I have sketched conjures up a spectre of vast hordes of government officials preying on the earning power of the country. That is a real danger under national government if the matter is not rightly handled.

A cynic once defined the state as an organisation for enabling one-fifth of the people to transfer into their own pockets as much of the income of the remaining four-fifths as they could, by law or otherwise, extract ; and the means by which this has usually been accomplished is the creation of a greatly excessive corps of public functionaries. Some modern historians suggest that it was the huge burden of a swollen and superfluous civil service which broke the back of the Roman Empire ; and a hundred years ago the Abbé Dubois, one of the most discerning missionaries who have worked in India, forecast that if British rule in India ever collapsed it would be the result of an attempt to build up an administration more elaborate and expensive than the country could bear. In fact this did not occur, because during the nineteenth century the British people passed through a phase of acute suspicion of the activities of government, carried almost to a fault, and public vigilance caused the bureaucracy to be severely pruned. These ideas strongly affected the British administration in India. In relation to the

size and population of the country the cadre of the Indian Civil Service, and other All-India or Provincial services, were in fact kept almost miraculously small, and the whole work was organised in very few separate departments.[1]

To-day in England and indeed throughout the world different ideas of the functions of government have come to prevail, and with the growing complexity of social organisation and advancing interpretations of social obligations new and inescapable tasks have been thrown on the administration. That the Victorian attitude is no longer appropriate and that to keep the government under the former rigid restraints would be disastrous few would deny. But there are inherent dangers in this expansion of government activities, among which must be reckoned a liability to the old diseases of parasitism which have lain dormant since the eighteenth century.

In India the Victorian ideas of public parsimony and restrictions in the functions of government — together with many other Victorian ideas — survived long after they began to disappear in England. India, for example, cannot be said to have been affected at all by the great move to develop social services which was started in England by the Liberal Government of 1906.[2] But Indian national governments composed of ministers elected by popular vote must inevitably — and rightly — turn to a wider and more progressive policy in these matters, and this will also inevitably involve a great expansion in the numbers of government employés. And here they will be faced with the dangers already mentioned, aggra-

[1] At no time have there been as many as 2000 British members of the Indian Civil Service in India. To-day the numbers are 588 British, 597 Indians. The Provincial Civil Service is entirely Indian in composition. Outside the I.C.S., small numbers of British officials have been employed in other special services, Medical Services, Police, Forests, Public Works, Irrigation, etc. Even to-day there are only six civil members of the Viceroy's Council (the Cabinet) together with the Commander-in-Chief.

[2] Possibly the fact that the Liberal Secretary of State at the time, John Morley, was one of the last apostles of *laissez-faire* may have had something to do with this.

vated by a special feature in the services as previously built up. The essential principle of the British administration was to keep down the quantity and keep up the quality of the British civil servants in India.[1] Very high standards were demanded intellectually and otherwise, and a type of man was recruited to whom promising alternative careers in England were open. To attract men of such a type — to offer inducements which made them choose an Indian career in spite of the disadvantages, such as exile from home and the need for a married man with children to keep up two establishments, it was necessary to fix rates of pay on a generous basis. That was right and defensible. The rates paid were abundantly justified as a minimum reasonable remuneration in relation to needs for expenditure by such officials. Then, however, when the 'Indianisation' of the services brought Indians also into the I.C.S., the desire to avoid any form of racial discrimination led to the same rates being paid to the Indian members. I have always felt that this was a misinterpretation of the laudable idea of equality. Rates which represented no more than a bare competence for an Englishman living away from home and generally having to maintain and educate a family in England as well as keep up a house in India, meant for an Indian considerable wealth. The scales of pay in the I.C.S. have had their effect on all grades of government service, for at each step some relation has had to be preserved as between one service and another. The result is that government service in India, generally speaking, represents not only the most honourable but also the most highly paid form of employment. This is certainly true of appointments in the I.C.S. and it approximates to truth right down the scale of the

[1] It is incidentally interesting to note that the principle of selection by competitive examination — as a safeguard for high quality and against nepotism — originated in the Indian Civil Service and was only at a considerably later date copied by the British Civil Service. In this as in many other ways the Indian administration showed at one time excellences well in advance of standards prevailing elsewhere.

other services. It is very questionable whether this is a desirable condition. The honour, intellectual interest, and security offered by government service should be balanced by a lower pecuniary reward. In England a high official at the Treasury may often find that if he chose to be tempted into private business he could earn four or five times the amount of his government salary. Fortunately he is not often tempted. He prefers the interest and honour of his government work. It is of course important to guard against going to the contrary extreme and paying government servants so badly that they are left to supplement their official income by irregular means.[1] But there is a real danger, if the general level of salaries is too high, not only that the financial burden of the necessary expansion of services will be prohibitive, but that a mercenary attitude towards government service will be encouraged. To an outsider it seems that there are some evidences of this effect which may perhaps with least offence be stated in the negative observation that there is a kind of honourable poverty among the higher British civil servants which is hardly to be found in the corresponding grades in India.

Whatever may be the truth about that, it is certain that one of the greatest problems of national governments in India will be to provide for expanding social services

[1] In a book by an Indian (J. Chinna Durai) just published called *The Choice before India*, the following passage occurs : " The Congress by its narrow policy has actually driven most civil servants to live on pepper water and rice, beside goading them to acts of corruption and bribery, thereby making them physical wrecks and moral delinquents ". This is indeed a case of Congress being paid back in its own coin of exaggerated statement ! That such a comment should be made at all is, however, significant.

One important factor must be noted in this connection, viz., the practice in India for large numbers of relations to lean for support on any member of a family who may be earning a secure income. Government officials in all grades tend to find themselves called on to support extremely large numbers of dependents. To recognise family obligations in this way is of course evidence of laudable qualities ; but the result is a heavy burden on the public revenue if salaries have to be sufficient to meet such demands and at the same time to eliminate the temptation to use irregular methods for supplementing regular pay. It is an unfortunate condition in India that other opportunities should not be more readily available and that Government service should be leaned upon to so great an extent.

without putting too heavy a financial burden on the country. No one has preached this more emphatically than Mr. Gandhi, and the hope must be that he and other national leaders will be able to create a new spirit of service. It is with the conception of such a spirit that I have sketched my vision of a national service for rural education and development.

But it is necessary to face realities. The national governments which took office in the provinces under the 1935 Act had an opportunity to make a start in this direction. How was that opportunity used? Do the first steps indicate that Indian governments will seek to create a new spirit of service or that on the contrary they will be forced rather to reward their political supporters and thus to create a new bureaucracy much greater in numbers, in total more costly and less efficient than the old? On this point I may quote an extract from a recent report on conditions after the new Provincial governments took office in 1937 which has been sent to me by a careful observer in India:

> The loyal supporters of Congress, who for more than a decade had endured poverty and imprisonment for its sake, looked up for their hard-earned reward; and the ministries, unable or unwilling to dismiss existing office holders, paid them in newly created jobs. Embarrassed by their importunity they very properly desired to put them to some service from which the public would benefit. What more natural than to send them to villages where, as schoolmasters, physicians, and secretaries of co-operative societies, they might play no unworthy part in the creation of a cultivated modern peasantry? The plan is not unreasonable; but all depends upon the quality of the men and the size of their total pay-bill; and as yet the villages show little enthusiasm for the emigrants from the towns who have come thus uninvited to their aid, whose advice on agricultural matters often provides subject for derision, and whose principal contribution is not seldom to create political faction of which the villages had previously been innocent.

For my present purpose I am not concerned with

establishing whether this extract gives an accurate picture. I quote it merely to illustrate the type of danger against which protection is needed, to support my plea for the need of spirit of devotion in government service, and to point my argument that in conduct on matters such as these will be found the crucial test of the fulfilment by the national governments of their most important responsibilities.

5. Manufacturing Industry

The foregoing paragraphs have been written with reference to rural development, but many of the observations have strayed into a wider field, while the spirit of all that has been said applies equally to the complementary policy in the industrial field. That too should be framed with an appreciation that the well-being of the masses of the people is the proper objective and the true test of success. And that idea will affect not only the methods to be followed in industrial development but its place and importance in a general economic programme.

By thus turning to industrial policy in the second place, I do not by any means imply that I regard it as of secondary importance. From every point of view it must be a main feature in a full economic policy. Public opinion demands it, and it is right. But if it is to be of real benefit to India there are certain dangers to be avoided, and if in what follows I mention cautionary considerations it is because, in the present state of Indian opinion, if there is a risk of mistakes these will come not from lack of driving power behind a movement for industrialisation but rather from failure in controls and steering gear. It is safe indeed to predict that national governments will in their early stages be under constant pressure of demands for the state to conduct a vigorous economic offensive, and especially for increased industrialisation. Although India already ranks eighth among the industrial nations of the world she is still, as has been already emphasised, over-

whelmingly an agricultural country. Yet she has abundant raw material, traditions of skilled craftsmanship, and an unemployed middle class hungrily seeking new openings. It is small wonder that the Nationalist cries out that it is the duty of the Government to bring these pieces together, thus expediting the Indian industrial revolution. He is the more insistent because he has perceived — and rightly perceived — the connection between industry and military and political power. He has seen too how in other countries, especially in Soviet Russia, the state by the use of the political machine has raised great industrial cities as it were from the ground. Equating industrialism with wealth, he sees in it the remedy for the poverty of the masses. It comes to appear as a kind of splendid solution of all evils. National pride too is involved since reliance on agricultural and other forms of primary production is regarded as carrying a stigma of backwardness. It is true that Mr. Gandhi is known to regard industrial civilisation as dark and satanic. Yet the movement of popular opinion is likely to be too much for him.

Against the pressure which is thus likely to influence Indian governments the balancing considerations can be briefly stated. The key point is that for absorbing a rapidly increased industrial output India would have to rely mainly on internal consumption. This is not to deny that there are many openings for industrial exports which India is already qualified to fill. There are indeed a number of manufactures for which she has special advantages — certain classes of cotton goods, jute goods, carpets, leather, both finished and unfinished, to mention only a few of the most important. But these are limited opportunities — not likely to have a major effect on Indian economy. For any great and rapid expansion in manufactured exports there are difficulties — the obvious difficulties such as lack of long industrial tradition, of workers skilled in mechanical process, of the selling organisation and commercial machinery which are necessary for overseas contacts and which can only be built up with time. India

clearly has a long way to go before she can compete in the world markets with industrial countries already long established. And, moreover, it has to be remembered that she would be seeking to enter an arena already overcrowded, since in recent years all countries have been moving more and more towards self-sufficiency, with a specially notable expansion of secondary industries in those countries which have hitherto relied mainly on primary production. This development will inevitably be accelerated and intensified by the present war with its interruption in the export markets for primary products.

Then again the reactions of developing industrial exports have to be considered. If India wants outside countries to buy more of her manufactures she must either herself buy more from them or accept the fact that they will be able to take less of her agricultural products. The latter alternative would involve a serious worsening in the situation for the rural population, since, as has already been pointed out, the loss of markets for agricultural exports would bring great distress on millions of cultivators who depend on export sales for just that margin of cash which makes all the difference to them. On the other hand additional industrial activity producing manufactures of the same value as the agricultural exports lost, would almost certainly not bring an equivalent benefit in terms of industrial employment.[1]

Much needs to be written in order to explore this subject fully, but it is hardly necessary to labour the point

[1] It would lengthen the text unduly to enter into arithmetical calculations of the numbers affected on one side or the other by replacing agricultural with industrial exports. But when one examines the extra numbers employed as a result of the great industrial advances in the last twenty-five years the results are surprisingly small. By far the most notable increase in Indian manufactures has been in cotton piece goods. Sir Frank Noyce in a paper read before the Royal Empire Society in 1937 gave the following calculation. Between 1913–14 and 1935–6 Indian cotton mills increased their production from 1080 million to 3500 million yards, while imports fell from 3130 million to 970 million yards. Yet the numbers employed in the mills only increased by 200,000. This extra employment balanced a drop in the value of imports of over Rs. 40 crores. Agricultural exports of this value would have affected the fortunes of vastly greater numbers.

that in order to absorb a greatly increased industrial output India would have to rely mainly on Indian consumers. And that means mainly the rural masses. As has already been made clear, these have no margin to increase their purchases unless they can produce and sell agricultural products to a greatly increased value, and therefore Indian industrial development can have no sure foundation unless balanced by corresponding agricultural development. In the interests therefore of the industrialists there needs to be balanced progress. But the same need has to be emphasised in the interests of the agriculturalists also, for if industrial development is pushed forward beyond the point of balance one of two results must follow. Either a part of the products of industry will remain unsold, or they will be sold at an artificially low price insufficient to cover the cost of production. In either case many of the new factories will be faced with bankruptcy. But a government pledged to a policy of industrialisation, and under the influence of industrial magnates and also of trade unions, is unlikely to take the heroic course of allowing the factories to fail, with all the repercussions in the way of financial loss, unemployment, and unexpected hardship which that would involve. Rather it is likely to make use of the various means at its disposal for mobilising the resources of one section of the community for the support of the enterprise of the other, and by a policy of tariffs, subventions, and subsidies to maintain at least the façade of industrial prosperity. The history of eastern Europe in the years following the last war was a melancholy spectacle of just such a sequence of events.

In circumstances of this kind it is easy to see at whose cost the stimulation of industry would have been affected. It is the peasant — at present thanks to the Mahatma the chief object of the solicitude of Congress — who would pay. He would pay in increased prices of industrial goods, artificially enhanced by tariffs ; he would pay in the extra taxation by means of which the government obtains the means to subsidise the bankrupt industries ; he would pay

in the relative neglect which in an industrial age is the lot of the countryside ; he would pay in the diminished foreign demand for his agricultural products which is the result of a high protective policy. It is the peasant who in the last resort in a country such as India must support the industrial apparatus if this is of more imposing a character than the economic circumstances justify.

This is a simplified statement of a very familiar theme. A detailed statement would bring to light many complicating factors and involve reservations and qualifications. But the broad issue is clear and would remain unaltered.

The conclusion that follows has already been indicated. It is *not* that India should set any limit to her ambitions for attaining industrial greatness, but rather that industrial must be balanced by agricultural progress, and that *artificial* encouragements to advance in the industrial field must be regulated as part of a comprehensive plan. It must be the task of government to apply this regulation ; to see that industrial protection is not carried to a point at which it fosters damaging inefficiency ; and above all to strive unceasingly by every means at its disposal to increase the surplus in the hands of the agricultural population which will give the surest and most permanent foundation for a great industrial structure.

Yet after all these cautionary words have been said it remains to emphasise in this field as in the field of agriculture how vast is the opportunity for India in her own internal development.[1] This is not always appreciated. To quote from a typical recent book by an Indian economist,[2] complaint is made that unless Indian manu-

[1] This is a point at which it may strike the reader that there is a certain unreality in the discussion in the text, because no reference is made to contemporary developments which are rushing ahead under the urge of the necessity of producing war equipment. I have already referred to this at the beginning of the first section of this chapter. I have deliberately followed the method of discussing the underlying situation in terms of normal factors and requirements.

[2] H. Venkatasubbiah, *The Structural Basis of Indian Economy.*

facturers can enter export markets on a large scale she can never become an " industrial giant ". It may surely be held that to supply the chief needs in manufactured goods of 400 million people is a sufficiently ' gigantic ' task.

The Welfare of the Industrial Worker. Close Interaction between Industrial and Agricultural Conditions: Education the Chief Need

But I want to turn now to consider industrial development in its effects on the well-being of the people, which, from the point of view taken in this survey is the essentially important question. It is in considering this aspect of the matter that one can see most clearly the close connection with what has been said about rural development, and the necessity for remembering that advance in the two fields must go together. As long as the village remains backward in standards of living (diet, housing, hygiene) and education it is hardly possible that the wages and manner of life of the urban worker can be substantially improved.

His standard of living is constantly threatened by the influx of fresh workers from the country anxious to get a job at almost any price, prepared to lodge in the most insanitary hovels and unaccustomed to any form of modern social organisation.[1]

[1] The close interconnection of rural and industrial labour needs to be appreciated. The following passage from a paper read at the Royal Society of Arts by Sir Frank Noyce on 21st March 1941 gives a good factual background: " The outstanding features of industrial life of the country (India) are: (i) the predominance of three industries, the spinning and weaving of cotton and jute, engineering and metal works; (2) the importance of the seasonal factory, that is the factory concerned with the handling of crops such as cotton, jute, sugar cane, ground nuts, tea, coffee and rubber and is open for less than half the year; and (3) the absence of a permanent factory population. The most striking element in the movement of labour in India is not the villager's willingness to leave his village to seek his fortune but his anxiety to get back to it. I should add that there are — or rather were, for the figures must have undergone rapid expansion in recent months — some 1,300,000 workers employed in the 5000 perennial factories, about half of which are to be found in two industrial centres, Calcutta and the Hoogly tract round about it, and Bombay both city and island."

This passage, quoted from a report for the International Labour Office of Geneva in 1937,[1] goes to the root of the matter. The report goes on to refer to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour in India of 1931 as covering the ground fully :

> Its findings have not lost their force to-day. Some of them have already been embodied in useful legislation, but the fundamental reforms suggested in the recommendations on education, industrial relations, health, housing and the standard of life still remain for the most part to be carried out. They depend mainly upon the desire for betterment among the people themselves and the recognition of its necessity by public opinion.

These are true words and they bring us straight back to the points already made in the discussion of rural development — the great opportunity awaiting national governments in India, the need to base all efforts at economic advance on an improvement in the health, education, mental outlook, and skill of the masses. The conclusion is that the effort to produce wealth otherwise than on these foundations and unaccompanied by more just measures for its distribution will be not only most probably doomed to failure but worthless as a benefit to India even if it succeeded.

Conditions of Industrial Labour

Any full discussion of industrial development should therefore start with a consideration of labour conditions. Space will not permit that, nor is it necessary for my present purpose. But some points must be briefly mentioned in order to give force to the main theme of this chapter. If in what follows the emphasis is placed on opportunities for improvement, this does not imply any failure to recognise that much improvement has been effected in recent years, nor does it imply failure to appreciate the excellent work done by the few men who

[1] Report by Mr. Harold Butler, then Director of the International Labour Office, p. 8.

have represented Labour interests in this field of politics, such as Mr. N. M. Joshi. It should be emphasised at the outset that existing conditions and scope for improvement must not be considered merely in terms of large-scale factory industry. It is well pointed out in the I.L.O. Report from which I have quoted that so far as large-scale industry is concerned conditions of work compare not unfavourably with those in many European [1] countries; that, industry being for the greater part of recent growth factories are as a rule spacious; and that, leaving aside the question of wages — which are indeed low — hours of work and other conditions as regulated by the Factory Acts are "in reasonable correspondence with India's present stage of industrial development". But Factory Acts and limitation of hours have normally applied only to power-driven plants in which twenty or more persons are employed, and there are innumerable small factories and workshops all over India employing many millions of persons. Their number is estimated at more than 10,000 in Calcutta alone. Under the Factory Act of 1934 permissive powers were given to extend the whole or part of its provisions to any manufacturing establishment employing at least ten persons. Something has been done in recent years to utilise these powers for improving conditions, but much remains to be done. In many of the smaller establishments no provisions as to health, sanitation, lighting, ventilation, or safety apply, while child labour is permitted and hours are long. There is admittedly immense difficulty in regulating these small factories,[2] but this is a field where improvements, already started, can be carried further by national Indian governments, supported by an increasingly enlightened public opinion. The point is emphasised here as giving force to the contention that industrial policy should be approached from the side of the wage-earning masses, and that a wide

[1] They are probably more advanced than in any other Asiatic country.

[2] These difficulties are fully discussed in the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, chapter vii.

spread of education is a necessary preliminary to any sound advance.

Industrial Relations and Labour Organisation

This point is again reinforced when one turns to consider industrial relations and labour organisation. The prevalence during recent years of industrial discontent and strikes, and the lack of well-organised trade unions and methods of collective bargaining, are notable symptoms both of which when fully analysed point to lack of education among the workers as the chief cause of trouble and barrier to progress.

Friction and discontent in the past can be very largely traced to the lack of human contact between employers and employed, to the almost universal employment (in both European and Indian managed factories) of a class of intermediaries to act between managers and men in handling all matters including engagements and dismissals, to the bad feeling which is thus created partly by exploitation and abuse of their powers by these intermediaries,[1] partly by the fact that completely illiterate workers are " liable to all sorts of unjustified suspicions and misunderstandings and are at the mercy of misleading statements and promises. At this point as at every other lack of education is the fundamental weakness of Indian industry." [2]

It is lack of education again which is the chief barrier to development of strong trade unions and effective methods of collective bargaining. There are indeed signs that employers in India generally recognise that it is in their own interests to encourage the growth of responsible unions, led by men who will deal with employment issues on their merits and not as a means for their own political advancement. The great difficulty lies on the side of the workers,

[1] There has been a considerable improvement in this respect in the last few years.

[2] I.L.O. Report, p. 18. All these matters are fully analysed in chapter xviii of the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour.

and is, in the I.L.O. Report, attributed in large part to the absence of any guild tradition, or of those organised bodies of skilled craftsmen which have formed the backbone of trade-union development in Western countries. Here indeed we come upon a difficulty of exactly the same type as is encountered in the political field. In Western countries generally — and especially in England — there has been a gradual transition from old to modern methods of industrial production, just as there has been continuity in the development of democratic institutions. India is faced with the task of suddenly imposing advanced forms of both industrial organisation and democratic institutions on illiterate masses who have had no gradual evolutionary education in their use, and no intellectual training to understand them. The only hope is to build up the masses by education to fit into these forms, and the great difficulty is that the need is immediate, especially in the industrial field, since modern industry with its mass factory employment is already there and rapidly expanding. However much a philosophic ruler might desire to turn back the pages of history and start afresh, that cannot be done. The only practical course is to make the best of the situation as it exists, and here, in addition to what can be done by education, there is perhaps an opportunity for collaboration in a good purpose between Britain and India. The traditions and experience of British trade unions may well prove to be of value as a guide. There has indeed been some contact in the past and British trade unions have from time to time sent out deputations to India. Contacts also used to be made between British and Indian trade union representatives at Geneva, but these are now interrupted and it might well prove to be of great value if closer contact could be established and if British trade unions could send representatives from time to time to India.[1]

[1] This is another case where war necessities may provide a new opportunity. The British Minister of Labour has just welcomed a batch of selected Indian workers who have been sent over to England for skilled training in war industries. Contacts thus established may prove to be of great value.

Wage Levels and Industrial Efficiency

A review of industrial possibilities ought of course to include full discussion of wage levels and industrial efficiency. For the present purpose it suffices to touch very briefly on these points for they lead back to the same conclusions. Wages and industrial efficiency vary widely all over India. At present the general average of both — but of wages particularly — is very low, yet there are sufficient examples of departure from the average to prove that the Indian workers can attain standards of efficiency which compare with Western standards and which provide an economic justification for wages very much higher than the average now paid. The I.L.O. Report already quoted points out that at present the rates of comparative efficiency of Indian labour may vary from 25 to 85 per cent of the European standard, and it goes on to say :

> The truth is that efficiency and inefficiency are largely determined by a combination of the factors of poverty, ill-health and illiteracy which are so widespread in India that they seem often to be regarded as being indigenous to the climate itself. . . . All these factors are however within the range of human control and to a large extent within the power of the individual employer to eliminate.

These three factors interact on one another in a vicious circle which must be broken. The surest way of breaking it is by attacking illiteracy with a well-designed plan of education. As is well said of illiteracy in the report of the Royal Commission on Labour :

> It is impossible to overestimate the consequences of this disability, which are obvious in wages, in health, in productivity, in organisation, and in several other directions. Modern machine industry depends in a peculiar degree on education, and the attempt to build it up with an illiterate body of workers must be difficult and perilous.[1]

[1] Report on Labour in India, p. 27.

And, it should be added, with an illiterate body of workers it is not only difficult and perilous but it may well be impossible to conduct modern machine industry in a manner which provides for the advancing benefit of the workers themselves. In an extremely interesting paper by Sir Frank Noyce read before the Royal Society of Arts on 21st March 1941 he reached the conclusion — in agreement with Mr. Harold Butler's I.L.O. Report of 1937 and also supported by several experienced speakers in the subsequent discussion — that in present conditions in India any substantial increase in wages rates, or any reductions in the hours of labour without corresponding reductions in wages rates, would inevitably increase costs of production so that agricultural workers might be unable to buy the relatively high-priced goods so produced. Here indeed is a vicious circle. In western Europe and North America it has been found, at least by efficient undertakings, that high wage rates and short hours of work do not necessarily mean high costs of production and that it has been possible to improve conditions of work under both heads very appreciably, while at the same time actually lowering costs of production. The conclusion seems to be that where the workers have a certain standard of intelligence (and probably too of physique) they respond to better conditions of employment with better quality of work, but that where they are below that standard there is not the same response and they accordingly are held down in the rut of a vicious circle from which there is no escape.

6. The Location of Industries

Avoidance of Huge Urban Concentrations

One other all-important matter must be mentioned. There must be very few observers of the results of rapid industrialisation in Western countries who would not wish, if they had the power to start afresh, to plan it differently — and especially to plan it in a way which would avoid

huge urban concentrations and leave more open spaces, so as to allow to all factory workers the chance of keeping in touch with the country and even perhaps devoting part of their time and energy to cultivating the soil. The gradual change-over to the use of electricity for the supply not only of motive power but also for certain manufacturing and metallurgical processes and the resulting construction of central power stations on a large scale have made the dispersion of factories much more possible than was the case when the industrial revolution transformed the face of England and other Western countries.

To India the main part of her industrial development still lies ahead, and her statesmen or industrial leaders will fail gravely in their duty if they do not profit by the lessons of Western countries and bring industrial establishments to the countryside rather than allow the country to be drained into huge industrial 'wens'.

Cottage Industries

That is one point, and there is another which fits in closely with it. Granting the necessity of wide industrial development in order to give scope, variety and balance to India's economy, there is no need for it all to take the form of factory development. For rural workers using time which would otherwise be wasted — and for Indian rural workers there is much of this at certain seasons of the year — there is a sound economic basis for the development of cottage industries, and even if in all cases the theoretical economic justification is lacking, there are many other elements of value to put into the scale.

It would immensely ease the strain of the transition towards a more intense industrialisation if these two points are given full weight in the general plan, viz.: first, a deliberate dispersion of factories over the countryside; and secondly, a deliberate encouragement of cottage industries. Much of the present industrial unrest can be attributed to the shock of bringing peasants from the quiet countryside into the clatter and drive of large factories.

To emphasise these points is of course to subscribe very largely to Mr. Gandhi's well-known doctrines with his insistence on the value of hand spinning and a general return to old handicrafts. It is easy to caricature these views, but there are deep truths underlying them, while even in this modern age they are capable of application in India without involving any economic absurdity. They might even be capable of great development if one can look forward to a time when electric current could be distributed among Indian village homes, and an electrically driven home loom might supplement Mr. Gandhi's hand spinning-wheel.[1] In highly developed Western countries there are examples of quite important industries based on work carried out in cottage homes. It would be well for those responsible for India's economic policy to study these.[2]

[1] There have indeed already been considerable developments in regard to distribution of electric current for small and cottage industries. The following is a quotation from a paper read by Sir William Stampe to the East India Association in 1938 :

" Turning to the field of minor industrial development, I would quote the instance of the expansion of the brass turning and polishing industry in Moradabad and other towns in the United Provinces as a result of the availability of cheap grid power. Scores of small factories have been electrified and are producing brassware at cheaper rates than were possible under the old manual system, thereby ensuring a greater field of demand and a larger scope for employment. In the flour-milling industry — especially in the vicinity of large towns — flour which was formerly ground by the cottage hand-mill is now being electrically treated and the labour thus released — largely that of women — is being profitably employed in cutting grass, weeding and other relatively more useful directions.

" In the Punjab and Madras, where electric grid systems are now in successful operation, cotton spinning and weaving mills, both large and small as well as cottage hosiery plants, are rapidly being connected. In the United Provinces, two cardboard factories have recently been electrified which absorb large quantities of wheat and rice straw and give direct employment to large numbers of men and cattle both in transport and in actual operation."

[2] To quote only a few examples. A large part of the glove-making industry of England (in the Yeovil district) is carried out in cottage homes. Again, in Bohemia (in the Gablonz district) there was an important industry in the manufacture of artificial jewellery — largely for the Indian market — which was almost entirely worked in cottages each with its wheel driven originally by one of the mountain streams in the surrounding area. Then too there is the French silk embroidery industry which has been largely based on the electric power-driven cottage loom.

7. Summary and Conclusions: the Need for a Balanced Policy

This review, though it has attempted no more than a very rough sketch of some of the main features in the economic position, has been carried far enough to provide a basis for such conclusions as are relevant to the purposes of this book. These conclusions may be briefly summarised. There is in India vast scope for economic progress and a unique opportunity to effect it with Indian resources, since in foreign trade India needs little more than to maintain her existing position (which is much more secure than that of most countries) and has immense latitude for advance in the development of internal production and internal trade exchanges. For this purpose a balanced combination of agricultural and industrial development is required, with emphasis on improvement of agricultural production and in the living standards of the agricultural masses as affording the only sure foundation for beneficial advance. For true progress on both sides — rural and industrial — the education of the masses in the broadest sense is the primary requirement, and to achieve this a great national drive inspired by a spirit of national service is necessary.

The final conclusion thus points to the interconnection of social and economic policies. No soundly based plan for improvement in material conditions is possible without an effective plan for education and other social measures designed to effect a change in the character and outlook of the masses. Social policies are therefore a pre-requisite for successful economic policy, while, on the other hand, economic policy aimed at improving material standards for the masses is in its turn a necessary means to the end of social advancement, since there can be little hope for a better life in the broadest sense for the Indian masses unless their material standards are raised out of the present demoralising rut. It is important, moreover, after stressing this interconnection

between social and economic policies, to realise how the tasks in these connected fields link up with the political problem. If national governments in India conceive their main task to be to promote the well-being of the Indian masses, then they have a full programme for many years ahead of them in developing economic policy and the widespread education which is necessary for its success. Such a conception surely reveals the possibility of a unifying purpose which might cut across the ordinary political divisions, an opportunity for co-operation in concrete tasks which might bring together parties otherwise separated, and which could be handled with national unity without giving occasion for communal friction. But, more than this, it has another and more profound political significance, since a system of representative democracy for India can hardly have any sure foundation or prove to be more than sham democracy unless there is a great advance in the outlook and education of the masses. But to mention these points is to jump forward to issues which properly belong to a later chapter.

8. Machinery for the Planning and Execution of Policy

While the conclusions of the foregoing section have indicated on the one hand that something much more is at stake in economic policies than the mere improvement of material conditions, and, on the other, that national improvement itself must depend on more than material forces, it remains very necessary to consider the practical machinery by which a balanced economic policy is to be put into effect.

The view has already been expressed that, when Indian ministries take over the full direction, there will be strong pressure for ambitious and spectacular state action in the economic field. The policies and beliefs of Victorian England can no longer stand up against pressure of this kind. It is no longer possible for those who deprecate

state action or economic planning to argue that these things are bound to break down in practice and be ineffective. The examples of state-controlled economies in Germany and Russia are there to prove that most comprehensive plans for state control of trade and industry can be made to work — to be for certain purposes extremely effective. Whether one likes the effects or the purposes for which such systems are adapted is another matter. Whether the ends are worth the means is a legitimate question. But that the systems are working realities which deserve serious study is unanswerably clear. The first point to make, then, is that it would be of great value to India if some of her best brains would devote themselves to close studies of the practical workings of these systems. There are others too which deserve serious study — the Corporative organisations of Italy, the "New Deal" experiments of the United States, the Danish economy and the methods by which Sweden directed economic policy in the years between the two wars.

The world indeed has during these last years been a vast area of economic experiment — not laboratory experiment but large-scale field trials. Indians, looking to the future destiny of their country, should go out into the fields of these experiments and learn how they have worked. This is no time for sitting in studies spinning theories by the lazy processes of logic, but rather for getting down to the hard labour of factual observation and practical experience.

Having said this, I may add certain conclusions based on my own studies and experience. Those who are attracted by the Russian or German systems as models for India would do well to observe certain things — the immense bureaucracy that these require; the ruthless control by which alone they can succeed; the opportunities for personal corruption which they offer; the human misery involved in the evolution of the Russian system; the fact that the German system has only proved that it can work in a country devoted to a single purpose, the

preparation for war; the immense complexity of handling business enterprise under government controls; and lastly, that in each case the system is still in its early days, so that no judgment can be passed on what its final results will be. I have a strong belief that systems of complete state-controlled economy such as have been adopted in Russia or Germany are not suited to India's requirements or capacities. India does not need anything so drastic, for, as I have tried to indicate, her economic tasks are, though vast in scope, of a simple and straightforward nature, demanding a wide education of the rank and file rather than elaborate and centralised strategic planning. Nor, turning from requirements to capacities, is it easy to believe that the Indian temperament and habits would be adapted to working under the rigid control involved in these Totalitarian systems, that India could produce the hundreds of thousands of controllers and officials required in their working, or that such a bureaucratic machine could either function effectively or be tolerated in Indian conditions.[1] The mass of small industries to which reference has already been made would be a special difficulty. Indeed the conclusion may be put forward with some assurance that a national government in the early days of its responsibilities in India would get bogged in unmanageable problems, hindrances, and difficulties if it tried to imitate either the German or the Russian systems. The wisest course for India, at least in the next stage, will be to follow out an evolution of the existing system of individualistic enterprise, concentrating her efforts on

[1] This conclusion could be strongly reinforced if space were available to give all the details of what a control such as has been necessary in Germany really means, so that it could be realised, for example, what it would mean in India to insist on the myriads of forms that have to be filled up on every business transaction in Germany. And even in Germany with her genius for and tolerance of bureaucratic controls the system has not worked with any degree of perfection even with the psychological stimulus of a national drive for war. The Germans had a saying, "You cannot have a policeman for every cow", which is vividly illustrative. An examination of the hard details of all that has been involved in the Russian experiment points in the same direction.

devising methods of supervision and control which will serve to avoid certain clear dangers and, above all, on directing her system of taxation and social policy so as to ensure that the benefits of increments in wealth are widely and evenly spread. Following up what I have said in the opening section of this chapter, her national policies towards this last-mentioned purpose can become much more effective if she acts in concert with a wide group of nations.

What, then, are the clear dangers to be avoided, and what steps are necessary to ensure wise supervision over private enterprise? As to the dangers, one of the most obvious is the danger of political pressure exercised by sectional interests; — a danger specially to be feared in the field of tariff policy and other measures for the stimulation of industrial development. It is not possible to overstate the importance of creating machinery for guiding policy on such matters which will work in a scientific and disinterested way. The point is so familiar that it need not be stressed. India has a very good basis on which to start, for in the creation of the system of an independent Tariff Board to examine every proposal for 'protection' of an industry, the Indian Government really did a piece of pioneer work and set an example which other governments might well envy and which indeed some have copied. This is a piece of machinery which needs strengthening. The creation of non-political statutory bodies for advising the government on currency policy and for the control of actual currency operations and Central Banking, as well as of a Railway Board for the management of the State Railways, are valuable instruments designed to serve a similar purpose in other fields.

While statutory authorities and boards of the kind just mentioned will help to ensure that activities in certain fields are directed according to the interests of the state and not of sections of private traders, the activities in each field must be fitted in to a co-ordinated economic policy. The machinery for the direction of general economic policy

is therefore a most important matter. Even if complete control on the Russian or German lines is regarded as impracticable, not only the demands of public opinion but the necessities of the case will require active intervention by the government as a guiding and controlling influence. On this the first observation to make is that such an influence cannot be wisely exercised except in the light of full knowledge; that the state cannot guide in the right direction without a map of the economic country over which it has to travel. It is necessary, therefore, to endorse all that has been said in recent years as to the need for improving the methods both of recording and interpreting economic statistics. The need is now appreciated and much has recently been done to meet it, but more is still required.

The second point to consider is how to devise means for establishing contacts and connecting links between the government and the instruments of private enterprise. If individualistic private enterprise is to be allowed to continue but yet needs to be guided and co-ordinated by the government so that it may fulfil a public purpose and conform to a balanced policy, then it is necessary to devise machinery which will enable government to 'get into gear with' private enterprise.

A suggestion frequently ventilated has been the creation of an Economic Advisory Council on which leading business men, economists, etc., should be represented and from which the government departments should seek guidance. Experiments with Economic Advisory Councils have been made in a number of countries in the years between the two wars but they have been almost entirely ineffective. The reason for this is fairly clear. It lies in the separation of the advisory from the executive function. The executive departments of a government must really retain responsibility and an Advisory Council can never really assume it. There is the practical difficulty too as to what is to happen if the 'advice' is not accepted — a difficulty which might lead to great embarrassment in the

case of an Advisory Committee with powerful political influence. Advice may often be given with sincerity and ability and yet if it is given by men who do not have to take the responsibility for its execution and who do not know all the facts and considerations, which are known — and very often can only be known — by the members of the government, it may quite well happen that the steps advised cannot be incorporated in a practicable government policy. Experience in other countries seems to indicate that ' advisers ' are either ineffective or become for all practical purposes the responsible directors of policy.

It is on other lines that improvements of machinery must be sought. The wisdom of following a method of evolution from the present organisation has already been stressed. The mere fact that the present organisation works and is understood by the whole body of the Civil Service affords a very strong reason for this statement. That means that the system of departmental responsibility must continue and that it is by remedying the weaknesses of that system that improvement should be sought. For the development of a comprehensive and consistent economic policy two improvements are necessary : first, that the activities of the various departments should be properly co-ordinated ; and secondly, that, within each department, there should be better provision than exists at present for forethought and planning. The general tendency now is for the executive staff to be so fully occupied with day-to-day routine and the necessity for immediate decisions that none have time to stand back and review the whole position or think ahead. What is needed therefore is to have within each department a special section charged with the function of ' forethought '. This must not be understood as implying an organisation of theorists. The staff of the ' forethought ' section should be frequently interchanged with the normal executive sections, just as officers on the General Staff of the Army must keep in touch with regimental work. At the head there should be an official of the highest intellectual

quality with long practical experience of executive work. The system should then provide that the 'forethought section' of each of the main economic departments should keep in close contact with each other and, in this way, the ministers concerned, forming perhaps an Economic Sub-Committee of the Cabinet, would be helped to concert a properly co-ordinated policy. As a support to this organisation it is of the highest importance, as has been already pointed out, that the general statistical work of the government should be extended and brought up to a high standard,[1] while a further necessity which has recently been specially stressed by competent observers of

[1] These suggestions are reinforced by and are in close accord with recommendations made in the Report of Lord Haldane's Committee on the Machinery of Government, Cd. 9230 of 1918. This report deserves serious study by Indian statesmen. One passage may be quoted on Formulation of Policy :

"12. Turning next to the formulation of policy, we have come to the conclusion, after surveying what came before us, that in the sphere of civil government the duty of investigation and thought, as preliminary to action, might with great advantage be more definitely recognised. It appears to us that adequate provision has not been made in the past for the organised acquisition of facts and information, and for the systematic application of thought, as preliminary to the settlement of policy and its subsequent administration.

"13. This is no new notion. There are well-known spheres of action in which the principle has been adopted of placing the business of enquiry and thinking in the hands of persons definitely charged with it, whose duty is to study the future, and work out plans and advise those responsible for policy or engaged in actual administration. The reason of the separation of work has been the proved impracticability of devoting the necessary time to thinking out organisation and preparation for action in the mere interstices of the time required for the transaction of business.

"14. But the principle ought by no means to be limited in its application to military and naval affairs. We have come to the conclusion that the business of the executive Government generally has been seriously embarrassed from the incomplete application to it of similar methods. . . . We urge strongly (*a*) that in all Departments better provision should be made for enquiry, research, and reflection before policy is defined and put into operation ; (*b*) that for some purposes the necessary research and enquiry should be carried out or supervised by a Department of Government specially charged with these duties, but working in the closest collaboration with the administrative Departments concerned with its activities ; (*c*) that special attention should be paid to the methods of recruiting the personnel to be employed upon such work ; and (*d*) that in all Departments the higher officials in charge of administration should have more time to devote to this portion of their duties."

English conditions, is for the development of a new type of civil servants who combine practical business experience with knowledge both of economic theory and methods of government administration.

Improvements of this kind in government organisation must, if they are to be fully effective, be balanced by developments on the side of business organisations. The idea has already been suggested that, unless a complete system of government control is introduced, the government, in order to produce a properly directed economic policy for a country, must somehow or other be able to 'get into gear' with private enterprise. It is for private enterprise actively to organise and adapt itself for this purpose and not merely to wait passively for government to direct it. The first thing that is needed is that all those engaged in private business should appreciate that although they are working for private profit they nevertheless have an important public function to perform, and that, unless they perform this function well and to the common good, they cannot expect society to tolerate a continuance of the system on which they earn their profits. A proper appreciation of this public function involves various things. Above all, employers of labour must realise that an industry is doing no good to a country unless it provides a good life for the masses who are employed in it, and, accordingly, that good working conditions and a reasonable standard of living for the wage-earners must be a first charge on industrial income. In addition to this, each industry must be so run that it fits in with the healthy economy of the country as a whole; and this means that in all sorts of ways its operation will have to be regulated in the public interest. If business men wish that such regulation shall be directed in the most sensible and least embarrassing way, it is for them to take the steps necessary to make it easy for governments to get a true view of the situation and know precisely the sort of measures which will best meet the needs of the case. This leads to the idea that each manufacturing

industry or group of economic activity such as banking, insurance, etc., should combine together to form something in the nature of a central council which will give the government its point of contact with the industry or group. One of the chief functions of each council would be to collect and digest statistical records of the activities of its group.

This, in itself, incidentally postulates a wide change in the attitude of at least some business leaders, since the supply of the necessary information would at times be inconsistent with the methods of secrecy and secretiveness which some hold to be a necessary condition for success in competitive enterprise. It is to be hoped that this attitude, which is broadly incompatible with the public interest, is becoming out of date. Experience in England indicates that the greater the efficiency and success of an industrial undertaking the less is the hesitation shown about full disclosure of all material information as to business methods and results. At any rate all that is written here is written in the belief that, if private enterprise is to be allowed to continue, one of the surest safeguards for the public interest is that the fierce light of knowledge should at all times beat upon every phase and part of business operations ; and that those engaged in each branch of economic activity should take upon themselves the task of presenting current reports giving a true and intelligible picture of all the important parts of their activity.[1]

The type of organisation for economic enterprise which

[1] It is interesting to note in this connection the recent recognition in the United States of America of the value of knowledge as to what is happening in the business world as a method of instructing public opinion and thereby guiding public policy. But the United States has needed to spend a million dollars and to have a report from its National Economic Council consisting of thirty-three volumes of evidence and forty-two volumes of monographs and conclusions to give its public information showing that a vast part of the manufacturing industry is in the control of a small number of immensely powerful corporations. The scale of this N.E.C. report indicates one of the great difficulties, viz. : the unmanageable size of any detailed survey of economic activity in a modern industrial state. The suggestion which I have put forward in the text would provide current information in a well-digested form.

I have thus roughly sketched may be thought by some to show close resemblance to the Corporative organisation adopted by Italy. Haters of Fascism may on that ground condemn it. That is no fair ground for condemnation, since to adopt such an organisation for economic enterprise, especially if it is based on voluntary co-operation, implies no acceptance of the Fascist political doctrines with their sacrifice of the individual to a state controlled by a party organisation. But there are certain real dangers in my plan which do need to be foreseen. There is danger, for example, in the possibility that combinations of whole industries might be able to hold the consuming public to ransom — or at least might tend to work for their own stability rather than for progress. This opens up a field of complex considerations the full discussion of which is beyond the scope of treatment possible in a general review such as is here attempted. I believe that safeguards against such dangers could be provided; but it is sufficient for my present purpose to call attention to the issues and to illustrate their nature by suggesting certain definite lines for organisation and action. The particular problem of combining an economic policy co-ordinated for a public purpose with a system which allows scope for individual enterprise and initiative is one which faces all those states that are fighting for systems of freedom against Totalitarian State tyrannies. That problem will concern India as much as any country — perhaps indeed more than any — and indicates one of the most important tasks which will lie before her statesmen.

9. Indian Public Opinion as an Influence on Economic Policy

My aim in the foregoing sections has been to convey the impression so vividly present to my own mind of the great constructive task which lies before national governments in India, and to give a rough sketch of the organisation and methods which may be suitable for carrying out

that task. That has been done in the belief that it is of vital importance that attention should be concentrated on those matters which affect the welfare of the masses in India and on which all parties and communities might find agreement, rather than on abstract political issues or communal controversies. To say this is not of course to imply either that the task described is the only task before government — for there is the maintenance of external security and internal order without which economic and social policies cannot be developed — or that constitutional discussions are of less than essential significance — for it would not be possible for a government to perform any task unless provided with a properly working constitution based on a sound political structure. But it does imply that all other matters of policy or organisation should be regarded as a means to the end of creating a society which will bring welfare to the Indian people. The other matters will be dealt with in the following chapters ; but before concluding this present chapter something has to be said as to the influence which public opinion is likely to have on the performance of what I have described as the great constructive task.

I fully appreciate that the picture which I have drawn, in its presentation both of the existing position and of the future opportunity, may be regarded by some as incomplete, or unduly optimistic. Many Indian writers treat it as almost axiomatic that the British administration has, from selfish motives, deliberately stunted India's economic development, while others, taking a slightly different line, represent the effects of British policy as having been to give a sort of twist to the whole Indian economy from which all society is suffering. The result is to create two different attitudes, the one that things are so bad that there is no chance of any improvement without the deliberate destruction of the existing economic system and its replacement by something totally different, the other that it is merely necessary to remove the artificial restrictions imposed for the sake of protecting selfish

British interests in order to open the way for automatic progress to a millennium. Both these attitudes, though they might lead to programmes differing in degree of violence, suggest the danger that policy may be directed into wrong courses under the prompting of the mere desire to do something different from the policies of the old régime. It becomes important, therefore, to devote some consideration to those policies, not for the mere purpose of justifying what has been done in the past, but in order to see what lessons can be learned for the future. Have they failed to make the most of India's chances of economic development? If so, precisely in what respect?

A full analysis of those policies and of Indian criticisms would involve a long digression, and I am anxious not to be drawn into a barren controversial discussion about the past, since that would divert me from my main task, which is to concentrate attention on constructive policies for the future. I propose, therefore, to touch on these matters only in a broad way and to the extent that they are relevant to my main theme.[1] I am concerned with the future, and in all that I write I assume — as will be apparent from what I have to say in Chapter IV — that Indian national governments will have full command of their own policy in the economic field, and especially that no sort of control will be exercised by the British Government in matters of fiscal or currency policy.[2] Criticism of past British policy is therefore only relevant in so far as

[1] If conditions had been normal and one had not to consider economy of paper, time, and other matters, I should have included a separate chapter on recent economic and financial policy for the purpose of giving a picture as it has appeared to one who has had to handle controversial issues in critical times. It might be of some value for Indian readers to know what it has felt like to be a British official endeavouring to combine responsiveness to Indian wishes with an adherence to what one believes to be the course truly dictated by Indian interests and under a cross-fire of criticism both from England and India.

[2] That, of course, does not mean that there may not be discussions between the British and Indian Governments on reciprocal arrangements of mutual benefit just as there have been between the various Dominion Governments and the United Kingdom.

that may have left continuing effects which still require drastic counter-measures or correction. Leaving aside the more exaggerated and unrealistic charges (as well as criticism based on a Marxian condemnation of the whole capitalistic system), the essence of the Indian complaint has been that British policy has — largely from fear of damaging British industrial interests — done its best to put difficulties in the way of Indian industrial development. This, it is said, has been done partly by forcing on India a long adherence to a free trade policy — followed in recent years by an unduly timorous system of discriminating protection — partly by an inept currency policy, and partly by the undue encouragement of British capital investment in India. Beyond this all the economic connections between the two countries tend to be viewed with suspicion as moves in the game of so-called " Imperialistic capitalism ".

Far be it from me to argue that no mistakes have been made, or that a consideration of British interests has never in the past influenced British policy — though that does not necessarily imply damage to, or disregard of, Indian interests. But the questions which deserve attention to-day concern the present and the future. In what state has past policy left India to face the future? How does that state compare with what it might have been if a policy more nearly in accord with Indian critics' demands had been followed? Are there continuing dangers to India from the British connection? Is there a need to break away entirely from the old lines of policy and start something new?

In considering such questions one may in the first place urge that they should be applied to conditions as they exist — not to imaginary pictures projected from the past. India has had a definite and consistent protective policy since 1921,[1] which, under the Fiscal Autonomy

[1] It must also be remembered that for a great part of that period a high general revenue tariff has prevailed (for many years 25 per cent) which has in itself had a substantial protective effect.

Convention has been, as the trade figures show, applied regardless, and in fact to the great detriment of, British interests.[1] There has, in recent years, been a remarkable industrial expansion, while trading relations with Britain have been put on to a basis of free reciprocity. Whatever may have been the position in the past, any idea that Britain can use her political position to impose on India commercial policies to British advantage has been absolutely abandoned. In recent years, with India, just as with the self-governing Dominions, the political ties of the Commonwealth have afforded an opportunity for discussing reciprocal trade arrangements of mutual advantage. But these arrangements have been freely concluded as between equals, and the trade figures indicate that it is India, in finding British markets for her products — rather than *vice versa* — that has benefited from the sentimental and political ties that exist between the two countries.

But, more important still, in assessing the actual position and in comparing that with what " might have been ", it is essential to be realistic as to the latter. It is not, of course, to be denied that, if a more extreme and undiscriminating policy of protection for Indian industries had been followed, certain interests might have been built up and certain individuals might have had greater

[1] The trade figures demonstrate this so strikingly that a few may here be quoted. In the five years up to 1914 India imported as an annual average from the United Kingdom goods worth £61 millions and exported to the United Kingdom goods worth £37½ millions, *i.e.*, a favourable U.K. balance of £23½ millions. In the last full year before the present war, 1938–9, the position had been completely reversed. Indian imports from the United Kingdom were £34·8 millions and her exports to the U.K. £43½ millions, *i.e.* a favourable *Indian* balance of £8½ millions. In the pre-1914 period India took 63 per cent of her imports from the U.K. and sent to the U.K. 25 per cent of her exports. In 1938–9 imports from the U.K. were no more than 30½ per cent of India's imports while the proportion of India's exports which went to the U.K. had risen to 34½ per cent. The transformation indicated in these figures is a still more striking testimony to British policy when the story underlying it is examined. The fall in British exports has, as is well known, brought widespread misery and disaster to Lancashire. Yet this has been accepted as a necessary result of the principle of allowing India fiscal autonomy.

wealth ; but the question which really deserves examination is, how would the benefit of the people as a whole and the strength of the economic structure have been affected if industrialisation had been artificially forced to a greater extent than has been the case. The true significance of all that has been said in the earlier sections of this chapter is that to have forced Indian industrial development without a balancing advance in the education of the masses and in the productivity per head in agriculture would have failed to improve the welfare of the people and would have left the entire economic structure weak and insecure. And that is undoubtedly what would have happened if the current demands of the industrialists had governed policy. Therefore in considering India's power to take advantage of her future opportunities, the practical conclusion which seems to be significant is that, even if it can be charged against the British administration that in the past it has tended unduly to eschew artificial means of encouragement for industrial growth in India, it has at least avoided falling into what would have been a far more harmful error, and that, as a result, India finds herself in a clean and healthy position for tackling her future tasks.[1]

Apart from the broad issue of industrial development it is not necessary for the purposes of this chapter to examine in detail the ordinary charges about currency policy, British capital invested in India, or the burden of the National Debt. Such profound changes in conditions are now taking place that all these questions will have to be seen in an entirely new setting after the war. I am content for the present purpose to stand on the assertions that currency policy, even if at times mistaken, has left behind no unhealthy position, that British capital invested in India has been of great benefit to the country and has

[1] Apart from this, if one is considering realities one must add that the immense urge to industrial expansion given by the needs of the war is, as has already been noted, completely transforming the situation, so that all the old landmarks and traces of past policy are being submerged or swept away.

at no time imposed an upsetting burden on its economy, and that India's public finances have been well, if conservatively, managed so that she carries the lightest burden of unproductive debt of any comparable country in the world.[1]

According to this appreciation, India's task in tackling her future development is not to abolish the old foundations and build new, but rather to plan how on the old foundations something better can be erected. And that brings us to the essential question — what room is there for improvement? Perhaps the significance of that can best be brought out by considering one general charge that might be made against the British administration. An Indian critic, having read up to this point, might say, "The most that you have claimed is that the British administration might have fallen into more serious errors, and that, for example, the situation would have been far worse if indiscriminate industrial protection had been given without balancing developments in agricultural production and in the education of the masses. But why has not more been done in promoting these balancing developments? Or let me put the matter in another way. You have written of the great opportunity before Indian national governments; but the very magnitude of the opportunity, the very scope for improvement which you show, itself points to British shortcomings. The British have administered India for more than 150 years; but although under their administration the population has increased by hundreds of millions, the standard of living for the masses remains on your own showing miserably low. The Indian people have indeed enormously increased in numbers, but life for the component individuals is not fuller or better or happier than when the British came."

This is a charge based on one aspect only of the British achievement, in answer to which many things

[1] The net annual charge for Interest on Public Debt is less than £7 millions.

should be said. To have given to the India that the British found a century and a half of peace and orderly administration with only a few thousand British officials, to have guided her material development so that she can support an added population of more than two hundred and fifty millions, to have worked up through education and constitutional development to a stage where Indians have it within their power to take over the control of their own destiny as a united country, represent achievements for which history can show no parallel and which when judged in all the stages of their development against contemporary world standards of Imperial administration can be a subject of pride to the British race. Even to the limited charge itself there are many cogent answers that could be given. Life *is* better in the sense of greater security and freedom from oppression, in the removal of threats of famine and in the reduction of disease. It is also better in material standards. Moreover, if one takes any of these tests and compares the state of the people of India with that, say, of the Chinese, the comparison is strikingly favourable to India. Nevertheless there is a truth underlying this charge which ought to be frankly admitted. But it is a charge not so much against British administration in India as against the conception of the duty of governments in the field of social policy which prevailed, at least throughout the nineteenth century, among all Western governments. The British Government observed no lower principle in India than it did at home. Indeed, it may be said that the government in India throughout the nineteenth century took a broader view of its function and of its duties for improving the condition of the people than the contemporary view held by the government in England, and that its intervention in economic life was much more far-reaching than that of most governments of Europe. It made itself responsible for enormous undertakings in irrigation, hydro-electric plant, forests, and the management of railways; it undertook plans on a great

scale for the relief of famine, and, by a series of commissions and enquiries, surveyed many branches of Indian life so that the government reports provided an unusually complete map of economic and social conditions over a wide area of the national life. But, since the turn of the century, the government in India has tended to lag behind. As remarked in an earlier section, it underwent no stirring-up comparable with that experienced in England when the Liberal Government of 1906 started to work on a new conception of what could be achieved by social legislation. Though there has been much advance recently, the Victorian traditions of *laissez-faire* tended to survive longer in India than elsewhere. That result was doubtless based on the honest conviction of the members of the Indian Government, who were glad to feel that they were able to preserve policies of Spartan rectitude in the matter of non-interference, undisturbed by what they probably regarded as vote-catching motives bred in a country where democracy had gone too far. This attitude was strengthened by the traditional reluctance of an alien bureaucracy to interfere unduly in the intimate daily lives of the people.

But in the most recent years the outlook has been greatly changing. The last war did something to change it : the economic crisis of 1929–33 did more : and still more has been done by Indian public opinion, which has increased its pressure partly because of its increasing power through constitutional reforms, and partly because it has been impressed by the tremendous experiments in government control of social and economic conditions which have been made in the surrounding world. There has been a great advance both in the need and demand for government intervention, and also in its technique. It is safe to prophesy that this advance will be vastly accelerated by all the measures which are becoming necessary in the present war. It thus happens that national ministries are destined to take over in India just at a time when these

new needs, conceptions, and methods are becoming the accepted currency of political thought. In addition to all this, national governments in India based on popular support will, as has been already emphasised, be able to undertake tasks with an appeal and on a scale which were not possible to the British official administration.

These circumstances all increase the opportunity ; but they carry with them a corresponding danger. The danger is that, in the first reactions against what has come to be regarded as too narrow a view of the functions of government, there will be pressure to go too far in the other direction. The force of the ' Opposition ' mentality which has been built up must be borne in mind.

What can be done to guard against the danger without incurring a loss of the opportunity ? The greatest need is for a single-hearted study by all who aspire for leadership in public life of the truth in these matters. One important truth, which I have tried to bring out in this chapter, is that India is likely to be landed in great trouble and to fail in advancing the welfare of her people if her government listens only to the selfish demands of sectional interests in industry for protection and does not concurrently improve agricultural productivity and, more important still, the education of the masses of the workers, industrial and agricultural. According to this interpretation perhaps the most real " charge " that could be brought against the British administration lies in the educational field — that it has failed to create a widespread system of education of the right kind among the masses so as to build them up to a state in which they can gain true advantage both from material developments and from political power. But let those who make such charges not belittle the magnitude of past achievements nor the difficulties and dangers of more ambitious policies of state intervention. The education of the masses required to bring about the necessary change in their character and outlook must be a slow process, and, if measures of state direction and control are rushed

or wrongly handled, they may easily bring widespread disaster with the result that the last state will be far worse than the first.

In other respects, too, if a more ambitious policy is to be followed, there is great need for careful study of all the lessons that are to be learned from the outside world ; for straight and honest thinking ; and for brushing aside illusions. I would therefore end this chapter by addressing to all Indian thinkers a fervent appeal to abandon barren dissertations on professed grievances about what is past and to concentrate on the future. The future lies with them ; the past is only of value for teaching constructive lessons as to the future. There is a vast deal to be learned from the experiences of other countries during the past twenty-five years, and the new conceptions which are in the air must be understood. Mr. Keynes, writing recently on the prospects of post-war recovery in England, reiterated the simple truth, too often forgotten or obscured, that capacity is measured by two things alone — material and man power, and he ventured to predict that the " humbug of finance " would not again be the obstacle that it was in 1919 and the succeeding years. Mr. Keynes's phrase stimulates thought. The orthodox financial precepts are something more than ' humbug ' because they afford most useful handrails to which men can hold who are not very sure of their road and who might easily, without them, stray over the edge of dangerous precipices. But they can equally be interpreted by men of narrow vision in such a way as to become hampering restrictions, and to deter those who hold on to them too closely from the exploration of many wide and fruitful possibilities. Those, however, who venture on such exploration need singleness of purpose, courage, and an adequate knowledge of economic ' topography ' by which to find their way. If Indian national governments of the future wish to shed some of the " humbug of finance " and undertake exploratory experiments, there is a very pressing need for

advancing their knowledge of economic 'topography'. What India needs above all is to concentrate her best young men first on accurate factual survey, and secondly, on the study of the technique and policy which have been tried or worked out in other countries in recent years. That I have already urged. It will bear repetition. If I were a dictator in India I would put a ban upon all morbid searches for past grievances and have nothing written except accurate factual surveys and studies of contemporary economic policies undertaken with a view to showing how India in the future can make the best use of her material and man power. If any wealthy Indian desires to benefit his country he could hardly apply his wealth to a better purpose than to the encouragement of work of this kind aimed at building up a body of scientific but practical-minded economists. One definite suggestion may be made. Indians might find much of value for their own purposes in the plans which were laid just before the war for the Nuffield College at Oxford.[1] According to the trust deed, this is to be a college "for post-graduate work especially in connection with the study by co-operation between academic and non-academic persons of social (including economic and political) problems". It was designed, to quote from Lord Nuffield's foundation letter, "to bridge the separation between the theoretical students of contemporary civilisation and the men responsible for carrying it on: between the economist, the political theorist, the student of Government and administration on the one hand, and on the other hand the business man, the politician, the civil servant, and the local Government official, not to mention the ordinary everyday man and woman".

Delhi University might well provide a suitable centre for such nation-building studies. Whether this particular suggestion be adopted or not, it is safe to say that unless India can produce economic thought of a higher standard

[1] Lord Nuffield provided a valuable site and an endowment fund of £1,000,000.

(more constructive and more accurate) than the average level displayed in current economic writings, it can make no useful contribution to future policy, and Indian ministers will be far wiser to use as their guide the orthodox precepts and rules-of-thumb which formed the foundation for ' Gladstonian ' finance.

If sound and constructive economic thought is needed, so also is accuracy, practical experience, and vision among the staff of government departments. One of the greatest dangers to be guarded against — if India is to embark on more ambitious courses of state direction of economic policy and of social improvement — is that of creating a huge bureaucracy of second-rate ability to prey like a parasite on the production of the country. It would be perhaps an exaggeration to say that excellence of the Civil Service is of more importance than the form of the new constitution, but it is an indispensable condition for its success. It is training of the right kind and men of the right kind that India chiefly needs if she is to take advantage of her opportunities and prove that national Indian governments can do not merely as well as but better than the British administration of the past.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRACTICAL TASKS OF GOVERNMENT:

(B) DEFENCE

"*Sufficient Forces*"

THE task of providing for the defence of India is one of the chief realities that has to be faced. If national governments in India are to have a secure opportunity to develop their economic and social policies and to promote the welfare of the Indian people, then, somehow or other, means must be found for preserving internal order and for preventing external aggression. That means the maintenance of adequate military, naval, and air forces. Can India alone provide what is necessary? If not, how far is Britain to help? On what terms as regards division of the financial burden? And what effect are such arrangements to have on the constitutional position? Here we come upon what has always been presented as one of the most stubborn obstacles in the path of constitutional advance. In all the proposals made in recent years — leading up to the final plan of the 1935 Act — the most important limitations on complete self-government and the most concrete reasons for any limitation have been found in the problem of defence. When Indians have complained that the form of Dominion Status proposed for them differs from that established in Canada, Australia, etc., it has been the problem of defence that has always been put forward as explaining the necessity for such difference. The problem does indeed present a fundamental difficulty, but it is unfortunate that it has come to be regarded as a sort of standing pretext against the grant of full political liberty to India. It is not a pretext, but a reality. The reality of the need must be faced, and there is no escape from that. But whether the

constitutional implications of the need have been exaggerated or wrongly interpreted is another matter, and one which deserves searching study.

Let us first, however, be clear as to the nature of need. The case, as it was viewed in 1928, midway between the two great wars, was clearly and succinctly stated in the Report of the Simon Commission :

As regards *external defence*, India has to carry a constant burden of anxiety and provide against actual dangers on her North-West frontier, which are wholly without parallel in the case of the self-governing Dominions. The 3000 miles of land frontier which separate Canada from the United States are undefended by a fort or a gun, and armed conflict with her neighbour is unthinkable. Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and Ireland are islands ; the Union of South Africa is equally unlikely to be invaded. The withdrawal of British troops from these self-governing areas has left them to organise such local forces as they thought fit, recruited and officered from within their own boundaries, and administered by a department of government which requires to spend but a small fraction of their revenues on the purpose. These Dominion units, drawn as they are for the most part from a homogeneous population, constitute a nucleus out of which, as the experience of 1914–18 showed, immensely powerful armies of the highest fighting quality may be developed under the stress of emergency, but in normal times they have no elaborate part to play in an organised scheme of national defence, for the simple reason that there is no quarter from which attack is to be apprehended or guarded against.

Contrast with this the situation of the Army in India so far as the problem of external defence is concerned. India throughout history has had to endure a series of incursions by foreign invaders, who have forced their way through the defiles in the North-West, and at other points where a gap was found in the immense mountain barrier which cuts off India from the rest of Asia. It is noteworthy that, notwithstanding the teeming millions of India's population, comparatively small bodies of invaders have often succeeded in overcoming all opposition and making their way through to the plains, where they have established themselves as conquerors. It is the difficult and necessary role of the Army in India to guard

against a repetition of these dangers. 60,000 British troops and 150,000 Indian troops (as well as 34,000 reservists) are organised into a Field Army, into covering troops, and into a garrison for internal security, with this task amongst others constantly in mind. In peace-time the duty of the covering troops, assisted by frontier levies of various kinds, is to prevent the independent tribes on the Indian side of the Afghan frontier from raiding the peaceful inhabitants of the plains below. From 1850 to 1922 there have been 72 expeditions against these tribes — an average of one a year. Behind and beyond this belt of unorganised territory lies the direction from which, throughout the ages, the danger to India's territorial integrity has come. . . . The outstanding fact is that the urgency and extent of the problem of military defence in India are without parallel elsewhere in the Empire, and constitute a difficulty in developing self-government which never arose in any comparable degree in the case of the self-governing Dominions.

But there is a second consideration which also makes the case of India unique. The Army in India is not only provided and organised to ensure against external dangers of a wholly exceptional character: it is also distributed and habitually used throughout India for the purpose of maintaining or restoring *internal peace*. In all countries the soldier when in barracks may be regarded as available in the last resort to deal with domestic disturbances with which the policeman cannot cope, but in Britain and elsewhere in the Empire this is little more than a theoretical consideration. The military is not normally employed in this way, and certainly is not organised for this purpose. But the case of India is entirely different. Troops are employed many times a year to prevent internal disorder and, if necessary, to quell it. Police forces, admirably organised as they are, cannot be expected in all cases to cope with the sudden and violent outburst of a mob driven frantic by religious frenzy. It is, therefore, well understood in India both by the police and by the military — and, what is even more to the point, by the public at large — that the soldiers may have to be sent for. We have been told that this use of the Army for the purpose of maintaining or restoring internal order was increasing rather than diminishing, and that on these occasions the practically universal request was for British troops. The proportion of British to Indian troops

allotted to this duty has in fact risen in the last quarter of a century. The reason of course is that the British soldier is a neutral, and is under no suspicion of favouring Hindus against Muhammadans or Muhammadans against Hindus.[1]

I have purposely quoted this passage at length because it gives the picture as it was normally presented in the years midway between the two wars, when we were still in a ' post-war ' atmosphere, and had not realised that in fact a sinister transformation to a ' pre-war ' era was taking place. Since then the picture has strikingly changed with consequences on which I shall comment later ; but it is the earlier picture which Indians have chiefly had before them in the familiar political discussions and controversy about defence — a picture, that is, of a need for a field army for defence against invasion, for covering troops for Frontier " watch and ward ", and lastly for troops for internal security — a picture of a standard force of about 60,000 British soldiers (since reduced to 50,000) and about 150,000 Indian soldiers mainly officered by British officers. Indians have been inclined to express the view that the requirements for external defence have been exaggerated, and many Indians probably would protest strongly against the Simon Commission's appreciation of the need for British troops for internal security. But the assertion may be ventured with some confidence that no Indian of any experience or standing in public life, if really faced with the power and responsibility of decision, would at any time in the last years (and still less now) have been prepared to say that India could forthwith dispense with all British troops and British officers, or even to accept a definite date by which all British personnel should be removed. It may be assumed, therefore, that there is common ground for discussion, since, even if ultimate removal of all British troops and officers is contemplated, some arrangements have to be made for the transitional period.

The constitutional argument on the British side has

[1] Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol. i, pp. 93-5.

been that since Indian defence thus needs large numbers of British troops and British officers for a period the precise end of which cannot be foreseen, and since these could not be placed under the control of an Indian minister, the British Government must maintain control of the defence portfolio. That has been taken to mean that within the Indian constitution defence must remain a 'reserved subject' under the control of a British minister responsible to the British Crown.

Indian argument against the British attitude has taken three grounds; first, that the whole conception of Indian defence needs has been larger and more costly than was necessary, and that in any case an unfair share of the financial burden of maintaining British troops in India has been put upon the Indian taxpayer; secondly, that the plans for 'Indianisation'[1] of the forces have been too slow and timid; and lastly, that the constitutional implications of the position have been unfairly interpreted.

The first, or financial ground, is not really material to the main issue discussed in this chapter, and, moreover, the position has in recent years changed in such important respects that many of the old arguments have lost their force. Increasingly generous contributions have been made from British revenues,[2] while Indian dangers have

[1] I greatly dislike the expression 'Indianisation', but it is such a convenient piece of verbal shorthand that I hope Indian readers will excuse its use.

[2] One important item of controversy was the 'capitation' payments, *i.e.* the contribution which India was asked to make towards the initial cost of training British troops until they were fit for active service. The total current payment in 1929 was £1,500,000 per annum and, as the cost of training had by that time substantially increased, the British Government asked for an increased contribution. This demand was resisted by the Government of India. It was eventually agreed to refer this matter to an independent tribunal composed of one Indian and one British representative and presided over by a distinguished judge from the dominions. This tribunal ("The Garran Tribunal") examined the issue of how much of the service of the British troops could be construed as being for "Imperial purposes" and how much for purely Indian purposes. In the end the tribunal recorded the opinion that the contribution instead of being increased should in effect be wiped out by the British Government giving India a subvention of £1,500,000. At about the same time economies of about

come to appear in so changed a light that few would now complain that the forces provided are excessive. The implications of this latter change will be dealt with later.

As to the pace at which Indian officers have been trained to replace British officers of the Indian army, the complaint on the Indian side has been as follows: "Granted that we need to build up our own forces, your Indianisation schemes have been merely tinkering with the situation and have been hopelessly inadequate. You started, for example, with your 'eight units scheme' in 1926, and that would have only given us eight units officered by Indians holding King's Commissions by 1946. Since then it is true that the scheme has been extended by various steps,[1] but all of them have been totally inadequate in conception to meet even the most reasonable Indian demands. All of them in fact postponed the date by which we could hope to control adequate forces of our own — that is to say Indian troops officered by Indians — to a period which no one could foresee." It may readily be conceded — although there is much to be said on the other side — that this is a complaint with which it is much more easy to sympathise. In fact, what has hap-

£6 millions were made in other Army expenditure borne on the Indian Budget. More recently the whole position was investigated by an expert Committee under Lord Chatfield — which reported early in 1939. This Committee recommended extensive mechanisation and modernisation of the troops in India, both British and Indian, and also a substantial reduction in the number of British units to be permanently maintained — this reduction being partly justified by the increased mobility and fighting efficiency which would accrue to the modernised and mechanised units. As regards finance the Committee further recommended that an additional annual contribution of £500,000 should be made by the British Government and also that the British Government should bear the main burden of the capital cost of re-equipment. The total cost of the latter was estimated at £34·33 millions, of which the British Government was to provide three-quarters as a free gift, and the remaining quarter as a loan to be free of interest for five years. These recommendations were accepted by the British Government, as stated in a despatch from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy of 16th August 1939.

[1] These included the setting up of an Indian Military Academy and an increase of the eight units to twenty-one.

pened since the beginning of the present war proves how widely it has been possible in the stress of emergency to stretch the previous conceptions of what was practicable. It was realised on the outbreak of this war that an enormous increase in the Indian commissioned officer establishment would speedily be necessary, so that the earlier policy of selecting certain units for 'Indianisation' and leaving the others unchanged was abandoned, and all units have been opened to recruitment of Indian officers. In order to accelerate the output of Indian officers two other measures have been taken. The period of training at the Indian Military Academy has been shortened from two and a half to one and a half years, and a new training school for Indian commissioned officers has been established. These two measures are expected to bring the output of Indian officers to more than eleven hundred a year, and the response to the appeal for recruits has encouraged the authorities to provide for a still greater intake at the Indian Military Academy and at the new School. Other steps have also been taken, as for example the reintroduction of Viceroy's commissioned officers in Indianised units as Platoon Commanders, thus placing all units on the same footing. Again, while the general policy of expansion has brought about these changes in the training of officers, it has also been decided to extend recruitment among classes and castes not previously enlisted. It is clear, therefore, that in this field as in others the war emergency will sweep away many hesitations, and telescope into a few years developments that might in normal times have taken a generation to accomplish. And thus one type, and the most realistic and reasonable type, of Indian demand is in fact being met at least much more rapidly than before.[1]

[1] The position in this respect is in fact developing almost from day to day as the war proceeds. The new Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Claud Auchinleck, who took over his duties early in 1941, has already shown a most sympathetic attitude. In a debate in the Council of State at Delhi on 6th March 1941 he supported an amended resolution recommending that "The Army authorities should now review the sources of

But this does not dispose of the underlying problem of the constitutional implications (the last of the three grounds of criticism). However rapid the pace of Indianisation, it must take many years before the whole cadre of officers, including generals and senior staff officers, necessary for the command and administration of 150,000 Indian troops — or perhaps a still larger standing force — can be fully provided from Indians; nor is it easy to say with confidence that the date can be foreseen when British troops can be totally dispensed with from India. Indian leaders have been inclined to brush aside the difficulty created by this condition. A typical attitude is that shown in an often-quoted statement by Sir Sivaswami Iyer in the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1924, who observed that "as far as my reading of colonial history goes none of the colonies was in a position to assume its defence at a time when a self-governing status was granted to it". But such a statement ignores the fact already stressed that it so happened that these colonies had in fact no defence problem (involving the maintenance of an expensive standing army) comparable to that of India. Such statements too fail to meet the real point, as also do more recent claims such as the proposal made in recent weeks by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, that the British Government should take a striking step to gain Indian confidence by appointing a Defence Minister responsible to the Indian Legislature. The mere appointment of a minister does not solve the problem. The thing that matters is to consider what conditions must be fulfilled before ministers responsible to the Indian Legislature can undertake the provision and direction of adequate armed forces in India. Until India can actually satisfy her own defence needs, she must remain in a position of dependence in this vital matter. There is no means of escaping this reality.

man power throughout the country and should exclude no class or area from consideration for recruitment in the formation of new units". This resolution was carried.

And of this reality there is another aspect which has not yet been mentioned. The discussion in this chapter has been concerned hitherto only with military defence. But there is also the vitally important matter of naval defence — which the familiar political controversy has generally and conveniently tended to ignore. Indian politicians have been apt to take their country's defence at sea more or less for granted. Yet it represents one of the heaviest burdens on the British taxpayer and one of the greatest services which Britain has rendered to India. Steps have indeed been recently taken to develop naval forces, and an agreement was made in 1937 which embodied a policy that had already been made clear when the Royal Indian Navy was created as a combatant force, and contained in itself a recognition of the fact that naval defence measures must always have more than a merely local significance and interpretation. But the Indian navy still remains of small dimensions.

How then should the political implications be interpreted of the inescapable reality that in any full system of defence for India British resources must, for some time at least, play an important part? This is the 'vital question'. To answer it adequately one must work upon a more up-to-date appreciation of the actual conditions than was given, for example, in the passage quoted from the Simon Report. The circumstances that have led to the present war have necessarily enlarged the conception of the problem while revealing it in more striking clarity. The old conception, on the basis of which the case has up to this point been presented, has been of an Indian responsibility for maintenance of internal security, for frontier "watch and ward", and for holding her land frontier against a local attack. That was the "minor danger". A "major danger" — of attack by a great power on India or upon the British Empire through India — was also envisaged in the background by the military authorities, and for that Great Britain assumed the responsibility. But this conception of a distinction between

the "minor" and "major" danger and of a corresponding division of responsibility was, as the recent Expert Committee under Lord Chatfield [1] pointed out, formulated in the years immediately following the war of 1914–18. Since then, the Committee went on to say, developments had brought into far greater prominence India's potential vulnerability to attack in other forms than those envisaged when the principle was laid down. Such attacks, if they should ever mature, would so vitally affect India's own well-being that they would demand her immediate co-operation in effective measures for her defence. In such cases India's defence would clearly be most effectively and economically assured by co-operation in the defence of points outside India which are strategically essential to her security.

These considerations necessarily raise still wider issues. They bring up — and the present war has made that still more clear — the whole question of India's place in the world, whether she can in fact be safe and free to develop her own destiny except as a member of a powerful group like the British Commonwealth, in these days when the policies of aggressive Power States like Germany and Japan have brought to all peace-loving and democratic countries armed threats more far-reaching than any hitherto contemplated. And if this conception, which involves responsibility not merely as an individual country but as a member of a group, is accepted, further wide questions arise as to the proper distribution among the members of the 'group' of the burden of joint defence. These questions have never been fairly faced in the past within the British Commonwealth even as between the United Kingdom and the self-governing dominions. Obviously in the future they will have to be more squarely faced, and this will affect India also. This is pointing on to other issues, the full consideration of which must be left to a later chapter dealing with India's

[1] As quoted in the despatch of 16th August 1939 from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy.

place in the world. But, for the purpose of assessing the nature of the defence problem and its significance in relation both to the Government's practical task in India and to the constitution, it must be followed up somewhat further here.

As to the practical task, not only recent developments of other Powers, but also the general change in methods of warfare with the increasing importance of the Air Arm and the increasing mechanisation of ground forces, have altered the problem in far-reaching ways. Japan, for example, has changed the significance of the naval need — and it is strange to recall that when the dominion governments were first set up our only naval rivals were European, so that the dominions' defence was covered automatically by such part of our navy as was kept in outlying waters to protect our trade. Naval defence in fact tended to be 'thrown in', and this attitude of mind affected the position as regards India also. Now all that is changed. Again the need for aeroplanes, tanks, and other elaborate technical appliances means more specialisation in manufacturing industry and in technical training for the defence forces, and that, in the first instance at any rate, has meant British cadres costing more and requiring more industrial strength as a support in the background. In other words 'Indianisation' has become not merely a matter of more Indian officers, but of more technical skill, more and greatly elaborated manufacturing development, and lastly, more revenue.

Turning to the constitutional side, what has been said suggests the following idea. It may well be that not only India but the present self-governing dominions of the British Commonwealth, including, be it clearly understood, the United Kingdom itself,[1] may find that their defence problem is something which must be removed from purely domestic politics, and that they will have to sacrifice some of their individual liberty of choice for the

[1] It is important to remember that Dominion Status is also the status of the United Kingdom.

sake of co-operating in a common plan. Not only India but the other members of the Commonwealth may find that if they want to sail their own ship of state in safety they will have to sail in convoy. For India or any other of these states to accept such a position, to be prepared each to bear a part in the common burden, need be no obstacle to the development of self-government either in India or in any other part of the Commonwealth ; but it will mean that defence in its fullest sense will become something to be kept outside the sphere of merely domestic politics, and it is well to look forward to such a possibility in considering the Indian problem as it is envisaged to-day.

It is possible now to give some answer to the " vital question ". But that must be prefaced by a reservation. The future is now shrouded in uncertainty. What will be the outcome of the present war ? In what state will the world find itself ? No one can say. But all that is written here is written in the belief that it would be the greatest folly to suppose that the threat of war will be finally exorcised from the world and that the danger of a rise of aggressive Powers will be for ever past. In a later chapter the view is developed that peace-loving nations, anxious to pursue policies of social progress, will have to combine in groups, and that the most hopeful basis for any combination will be the group of nations included in the British Commonwealth working together with the United States. These groups will have to make adequate provision for their defence. The mistake made after the last war must not be repeated.

Accepting this view, one can envisage that for all members of the British Commonwealth — the United Kingdom itself, the present self-governing dominions, and India, for all these equally — there will be two distinguishable elements in their defence tasks. First, the task of *local* defence ; secondly, the share in the " group task ". And the share in this latter task will have to be assessed both for normal peace-times and for the emergency of

war. The *local* task will be a matter for each state government, the *group* task will be one for joint handling among the members of the Commonwealth.

What does this mean for India, and for an Indian national government to be set up in the near future? I visualise Indian representatives taking part in a discussion of India's share in the "group task" in complete parity with the representatives of the other members of the Commonwealth. When, however, we come to consider India's provision of local defence measures, we are confronted by the difficulty already described that for some time to come substantial elements of British personnel will be necessary. But need this affect the Indian constitution? Could not the British assistance which will be required be provided for by some extra-constitutional agreement, convention, or treaty? The phrase does not matter. Such a convention might provide, first, for the maintenance of a certain number of British troops in India, and, secondly, for an agreed policy as regards the Indian army, a policy covering the rate of Indianisation, the methods for recruiting officers and other ranks, and all other matters concerned with the development of Indian defence forces — land, sea, and air. This plan might be based on a series of progressive stages for the Indian army, leading up to a stage in which such British officers as remained would be provided in the same way as a limited number of British officers were provided for the Egyptian army, *i.e.* by the seconding of British army officers for considerable periods.[1] The command of all troops in India would remain for the first period of the convention under the British commander-in-chief, and at the end of this period the position would be reviewed. But India would at once have her own Defence Minister who would be responsible for watching the carrying out

[1] On this, and other points, it is of interest in considering the Indian problem to examine how the comparable problem has been handled in Egypt. The parallel is by no means an exact one, but the comparison has interesting features.

of the terms of the convention and for representing the Indian national government's policy in the Commonwealth Defence Council.

This very rough sketch of a possible plan will of course raise many questions both as to its practical effects and its constitutional significance.

On the practical side the main question will be, " Does the proposed plan imply that India would not only have to maintain forces for her local defence on something like the present scale, but in addition make contributions to the general Commonwealth Defence expenditure ? " There is, as a matter of fact, a certain unreality in discussing separately what have been described as the two elements of the task. The distinction is, in a sense, a metaphysical one. Forces maintained for local defence must of course also be available in any general struggle in which the Commonwealth might be involved. That indeed has already been recognised in the appreciation quoted from the Chatfield Committee's report. It might well be that in the case of India, forces maintained for her local defence would be on such a scale as could be regarded as sufficient to fulfil her full peace-time contribution to the general Commonwealth defence plan, whereas, in the case of a country like Canada, whose peace-time defence needs have been small, it might be that her share in the task of Commonwealth defence might represent her main expenditure. These are obviously matters which must be settled when the whole problem is squarely faced with the purpose of finding a fair division of the responsibility.

Turning to the constitutional side, it is clear that Indians will in the first place ask what will be the power and significance of the position of an Indian Minister of Defence, if in fact the command of all troops in India remains with a British commander-in-chief responsible to the British Crown. This is obviously a difficult question which cannot be fully answered except in the settling of the general constitutional position which will be discussed

in the next chapter. Certain things, however, can be said at this stage. In the first place the Defence Minister in the plan proposed would in fact have considerable scope and power, though of course the significance and success of the whole plan would largely depend on the spirit in which it was worked and on the personal relations between the minister and the commander-in-chief. In the second place it must be emphasised that the plan is only suitable for, and only put forward as, a provisional arrangement, an arrangement which in effect would mean that the British Government for a time would contract to perform a large part of the services required for the defence of India, leaving the Indian national governments in their early years free to concentrate mainly on the tasks of internal government. Those tasks, if the appreciation in the preceding chapters is accepted as a true one, are great enough, and indeed, an English reader, looking back over the past few years, might be tempted to exclaim "How fortunate!" if presented with the prospect of a government able to devote itself entirely to its internal social policy. It may in fact truly be said of the English people that after the last war they wanted nothing better than to go back to a quiet world in which they could develop their social policies at home regardless of external threats. That indeed is precisely what they tried to do and what may be said to have led them into allowing Germany to get such a long start in building up the mechanism for aggressive war.

As already explained, I have deliberately confined myself in the foregoing paragraphs to giving no more than a rough sketch of the lines on which a solution might be found. The exact details of a completely elaborated plan will no doubt present some difficulties, but I believe that if realities are faced, and if it is made clear that the defence position is to be regarded not as a pretext for limiting constitutional freedom but as a concrete unavoidable problem which has got to be settled with two things in view — first efficiency, and secondly as little interference

with India's constitutional freedom as possible — then statesmen on both sides will be able to find a solution which Indian public opinion would accept. It will, of course, be necessary to convince Indian public opinion both that the financial burden is fairly distributed and that England is not, at the cost of the Indian taxpayer, securing to herself selfish benefits in trade or otherwise out of India's economy.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSTITUTION

"The Confidence of the People"

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

IN the preceding chapters the main practical tasks which will confront national governments in India have been surveyed. An appreciation has been given, first, of the work to be done in the social and economic field, and secondly, of what is involved in securing the defence of India. The former has been represented as the great constructive task which will lie before the government and as a vast opportunity, the latter as covering one of the chief conditions for its fulfilment. With these tasks in mind we can turn in a realistic spirit to consider plans for the machinery of government and for the political structure on which that is to rest.

As a plan, the Act of 1935 holds the field in the sense that no other plan completely worked out in practical detail has been put forward. Negative criticisms of the Act there have been in plenty, and a number of proposals have been made either for changing the whole pattern of the constitution which it sets up or for rearranging some of the pieces in the pattern. But none of these proposals has been fully worked out, and it is the stage of completion — the finding of places for *all* the pieces, the framing of practical and detailed provisions — that creates the real difficulty and provides the final test. The Act of 1935, even to those who object to its whole plan and not merely to certain details, has at least the value that it contains a sort of catalogue of all the points for which some provision is required. It therefore provides a good guide for a realistic survey of the field of problems.

Certain things should be said at the outset. Whatever

may be thought about the general plan or details of the Act, one thing is clear: — that its provisions are such as would have placed in the hands of Indian ministers complete and ample powers to perform what I have described as the great constructive task of government. The social and economic field was laid open before them with nothing to hamper their work in it. The actual experience of the Provincial ministries in the two years during which they functioned proved that this was so. Moreover, so far as this Provincial part of the plan was concerned — and it is the only part that has been tested — it was demonstrated in practice that the existence of reserved powers and safeguards did not seriously hamper the freedom of Indian ministers to pursue their chosen policies. That is indeed what the sponsors of the Act had always hoped. And this experience supported the further hope that, when the full plan came into operation and a Federal government at the centre was established, the reservations and powers (for example as regards defence) which had appeared to offer still more intractable difficulties might equally have been approached in a spirit which would have opened the way for Indian ministries to pass by a smooth transition to full and untrammelled responsibility in every field of government.

I have emphasised these considerations at the outset of this chapter because it seems to me important that Indian opinion should appreciate that a deep impression has been made on the liberal-minded friends of India in England by what has appeared to them as a failure to give a fair trial to the Act of 1935. Those who had carefully studied the Indian situation and the provisions of the Act felt that, however large the safeguards and reservations on complete freedom might loom on paper, Indian ministers, if they took advantage of the wide powers which were given to them, would establish themselves in so strong a position that restraints could never effectively be imposed against any course which was in the interests of India and which commanded the genuine support of Indian opinion. Such

people saw in the first workings of the Provincial governments great signs for encouragement, and were prepared to let these outweigh in their judgment certain danger signals which also appeared. But they have been discouraged and, indeed, entirely baffled by the recent conduct of the Congress leaders, and they cannot avoid misgivings that in this conduct they have shown not a desire to move by the quickest road to the establishment of true self-government in India on democratic foundations, but rather to look chiefly to establishing Congress as the dominant party in India with Congress leaders as the personal wielders of all power. " To certain zealots ", wrote Francis Bacon, " all speech of pacification is odious. ' Is it peace, Jehu ? What hast thou to do with peace ? Turn thou behind me.' Peace is not the matter but following and party."

There is another aspect of British opinion that should also be emphasised. That opinion in the main, as brought out in Part I of this book, has, from the earliest days of the British connection, moved steadily and consistently towards the establishment of constitutional freedom in India. But underlying it there has always been the assumption that freedom meant democracy and that self-government would mean government for the benefit of the masses of the Indian people. If British opinion is forced to take the view that self-government in India will mean the domination of a particular class or political organisation, then there may be a profound reaction. This is a reality to be reckoned with, since, however much Indians may assert that the future government of their country is a purely Indian problem, there is no way of avoiding the fact that in its settlement there must be co-operation between Britain and India, and that British public opinion will powerfully affect the course which the settlement may take.

2. Current Controversy and the Real Issues

Having made these preliminary observations which must, incidentally, be interpreted as implying a plea that all the sincere work put into the 1935 Act should not be lightly discarded as useless, we may, taking that plan as our starting-point, turn to a more detailed consideration of the foundations for any constitutional plan in India.

The main framework of the Act has been described in Part I. In essence its purpose was to transfer the government of India to ministries responsible to elected parliaments subject to reservations and safeguards imposed for three purposes : protection of the interests of minorities, protection of special British interests, and protection of a position necessary to enable Great Britain to fulfil those responsibilities which India was not yet ready to assume.

The Act, as recorded in Part I, has not been accepted as satisfactory by any of the political parties. The objections have fallen into two distinct classes : first, objections arising between India and Britain in regard to British interests and responsibilities, and, secondly, objections to the position to be created among Indians by the scheme as a whole. The difficulties in the two fields are mixed together and interact at several points ; but there can be no clear understanding of the position unless the distinction between the two is kept in mind.

There are moreover subdivisions of these two broad fields as well as other issues both of principle and procedure which need to be separately appreciated. The matters for settlement between Britain and India are of varying nature and importance and over the whole stands the claim of the Congress party for the independence of India. Again among the intrinsically Indian problems there are three main divisions : first, the problem of securing a fair balance of power between the various communities (generally represented as the problem of safeguards for " Minorities ") ; secondly, the problem of the relations between the absolutist Indian states and democratic " British

India" ; and lastly, the problem of the relations and division of power between the constituent units and the Federal authority — a problem familiar enough in the history of other countries but with special features in India. Then too there are problems of procedure. If the Act of 1935 is to be replaced by a plan commanding fuller support from India, by what sort of body and with what procedure is such a plan to be discussed and ratified ? How, too, are the steps towards the inauguration of the new constitution to be ordered and handled ? And lastly, there is a practical question of the day : — now that the interruption of the war has come during which it is so difficult to complete the complex constitutional discussions involved in devising a plan to replace that of 1935, what provisional or interim arrangement can be made so that Indians may be more fully associated with the task of government during the critical and formative period of the war, and so that the course of constitutional advance may not be indefinitely and dangerously blocked ?

This is no exhaustive logical classification of the different issues ; but it is a list of practical questions all of which tend to be involved and interact in current controversy. For a true diagnosis it is necessary to distinguish between them, and above all not to lose sight of the main underlying problems, since there can be no shirking of these by expedients of procedure or provisional compromise. It may be added that it is necessary also to appreciate that the latter are real problems — the products of historical antecedents and normal human characteristics — not imaginary ' bogeys ' or the unnecessary creations of unreasonable men.

The manner in which all these different issues are liable to become confused is seen in the story of the present constitutional impasse. Congress originally objected to the 1935 Act mainly on the grounds, first, of the powers reserved to the British authority (the reservation of Defence and Foreign policy and the overriding powers for certain purposes vested in the representatives

of the Crown), and, secondly, of the position accorded to the States in the Federal legislature (their representation by nominated instead of democratically elected members and the 'weightage' accorded to them). These were precise and concrete issues, but they later became merged in two overriding general demands: first, that the framing of a new constitution should be left to an Indian Constituent Assembly elected on an adult suffrage basis, and secondly, that India's right to independence from the British Commonwealth should be acknowledged. Concurrently, the Moslems, alarmed by the experience of provincial government under Congress ministries, have been organising themselves more closely and in more hostile opposition to Congress and, while making it clear above all that they cannot agree to entrust their fate to a Constituent Assembly of the kind demanded by Congress, have moved towards plans for protecting Moslem interests by some form of political segregation of the Moslem areas. Lastly the Princes, also alarmed by Congress claims and policy, have shown an increasing reluctance to accede to any form of Federation. The coming of the war found these controversies still unsolved and the Central Government still conducted by the Viceroy and an official Executive Council. This has introduced a new interim problem. It was generally agreed — and Mr. Gandhi himself publicly stated this view — that the complicated process of framing a constitution in substitution for that of the 1935 Act could not be completed during war. On the other hand all parties — including the British Government — have recognised that some method ought to be found for associating leading Indian statesmen with the task of government during the critical period of the war. But there has been great controversy over the practical means for giving effect to this idea. The constitutional authority which now rests with the British Crown and Parliament clearly cannot be transferred to an Indian legislature except on the basis of a new and balanced constitution. Yet the various Indian parties have all

demanded assurances that if their members joined the Government they should have a position as ministers which would in fact involve a shifting of the constitutional responsibility. The Congress party have made a straight demand that the members of the Government should be responsible to the elected members of the existing Central Legislature. The Moslem League has strongly opposed this Congress proposal, and made extreme demands for its own representation. Even the Liberals, though the exact significance of their demand is less clear, seem to require something which would in effect mean a substantial change in the basis of responsibility. It is easy to sympathise with the demand that the new Indian members of the government should in practice have effective power if they are invited to share in responsibility, but it is difficult to see how, short of a full constitutional settlement, anything more can be attempted than a provisional arrangement, the success of which would depend on mutual confidence and a real desire for co-operation. In any case, however, this problem of a provisional arrangement is a problem *sui generis* and essentially different from the main issue of the final constitution. To hesitate over the provisional arrangement implies no weakening in the final purpose.

While this special war issue has tended to confuse the constitutional discussion, a further quite irrelevant element of confusion has been added by Mr. Gandhi's claim for the right to preach pacifism — not merely as a general principle, but in the form of direct discouragement of participation in the war effort. This is a right that no government involved in a desperate fight for its existence could concede, and Mr. Gandhi has, therefore, by enjoining his followers to defy the Government, been able to stage a direct conflict with official authority and to produce a situation most distressing to all who sincerely desire to see co-operation for constitutional advance in India.

It will thus be seen that, although the British Govern-

ment is now in dispute with Congress, this is not, as some Indian politicians represent and as sections of the public in England and elsewhere tend to believe, a straightforward conflict between a people desiring to be free and an Imperial Government reluctant to part with its control. The fact is that many struggles are going on simultaneously. Nationalist India struggles with Great Britain; Hindus and Moslems contest for supremacy; there are issues between the Princes and the democratic politicians of British India as well as issues between those who seek the domination of one party and those who want a balancing party system ; there are divisions on religion too and on economic policy. And in no case is the issue a simple one, for there is the issue of the final solution, of the provisional war-time régime, and lastly of the Congress claim of the right, as a measure of protest, to impede the joint war effort. It is as if several games of billiards are being played on the same table, the balls of each knocking awry those of the others. This is a confusing hurly-burly in which we must grope towards a settlement which can still or lessen all quarrels both of the communities and parties with one another and of these severally with Great Britain.

It is no part of the object of this book to enter upon a discussion of the changing aspects of day-to-day controversy. Indeed its purpose is the directly contrary one of turning attention to the fundamental issues and presenting these in their proper proportion in a historical setting. Yet it is necessary to refer to current controversy in order to guard against the confusion which it may create in public opinion, thus leading either to pressure for wrong measures or to suspicion and misunderstanding which may prevent the chance of a right solution of the fundamental problems. It is for this purpose that the general confusion of the controversy proceeding at the time of writing has been described. Perhaps some hopeful interim solution will have been found by the time this book is published, but in any case the fundamental issues will remain, and

it is on these that it is desired to concentrate attention. Before turning to this task, however, it may not be out of place to put in a plea for an understanding of the difficulties in which the British Government is placed.

The view is sincerely held on the British side that to yield to Congress demands would be to disregard the just claims of other parties and communities in India and thus to open the way to possibilities of disturbance and perhaps even civil war, or at least to create such an atmosphere as would lead to the collapse of any form of democratic government.

Congress on the other hand challenges this statement [1] and says in effect, " Sever at once the British connection and the communities would almost immediately agree. What keeps them apart is the belief of the minorities that, failing a settlement with the majority, they can always rely on British protection, and thus in negotiation they pitch their terms at an impossible height. But with the British arm withdrawn, their terms will come down with a run."

There is an element of truth in the last part of this appreciation, and, indeed, the British Government is in the unfortunate dilemma that, on the one hand, it carries the responsibility for ensuring protection of minority interests, and that, on the other, the unqualified acknowledgment of this responsibility may encourage minority intransigence, with the result that 'protection' might degenerate into a veto on all progress. But to recognise the second horn of this dilemma does not involve an acceptance of the Congress argument. To leave the minorities to make the best terms that they could, would be — and there is no escape from this — a betrayal of British obligations ; and, beyond this, it would almost certainly lead not to the minorities accepting Congress terms but to their

[1] Sometimes, however, Congress speakers admit the possibility of civil conflict, but belittle its significance. Mr. Gandhi, according to Press reports, has recently said that, if the British were to clear out of India the dispute would be settled by civil war, but that this would not be of long duration as Indians have not been trained to arms !

falling back for protection on their own strength exercised in unconstitutional ways. The search for a way out seems to lead only to a second dilemma. If it is urged that Britain should not allow her ' protection ' of minorities to be used as an encouragement for an unreasonable and intransigent attitude, how can she prevent it except by defining how far her protection would go, *i.e.* up to what point minority demands would be regarded as reasonable and supported by her ? To do this, however, would be tantamount to Britain herself giving an award — as indeed she was forced to do on a past occasion when Ramsay MacDonald was asked by the Indian representatives at the Round Table Conference (including Mr. Gandhi himself) to give an award on the communal franchise question. But this is a course which Britain desires to avoid in deference to the resentment which it arouses on the Indian side.[1] Then too a third dilemma is created by the special circumstances of the immediate controversy over a provisional war-time régime. On the one hand a substantial transfer of *constitutional* power cannot safely be made except on the basis of a complete and properly balanced new constitutional structure, while the framing of such a structure, if the 1935 Act is rejected, can hardly be undertaken in time of war. On the other hand, however, to impose indefinite delay on all advance is a course which British opinion dislikes, which Indians can reasonably resent, and which may lead to suspicion and trouble which will militate against a final solution.

There is no escape from any of these dilemmas without help from the various Indian parties — help in the form of realistic approach, constructive intellectual effort, and mutual trust. The British Government on its side must do everything possible to remove mistrust in the field of

[1] The existence of this dilemma is clearly illustrated by recent comment on the current controversy. The Secretary of State has in effect said to the various Indian parties, " Agree among yourselves and the way is open to advance ". Having said this, he is attacked for adopting a negative attitude, knowing that agreement is impossible. But he would be subject to still more violent attack from India if he had himself prescribed the terms of settlement.

purely British issues, and must recognise that the most important practical question in current relations is " What can the British Government do now to convince Indian opinion that it does really mean that self-government shall be set up in India at the earliest possible moment, and that its own hesitations are due to reasons genuinely founded on principle and respect for Indian interests, not on the desire to protect selfish British interests or to find excuses at the last moment for holding up the transfer of power ? "

In short, for any successful traversing of the unavoidable difficulties of the transitional period as well as for the devising of final constitutional solutions, mutual confidence and understanding are necessary, and in establishing these both peoples must play their part. The only sure way to attain this condition is to see the truth of the problems. The rest of this chapter is therefore devoted to an examination of these and of possible solutions, dealing first with what are essentially Inter-Indian issues and then turning to those which concern relations between Britain and India.[1]

3. Inter-Indian Issues

The Communal Problem or the Problem of the Minorities

In the field of Inter-Indian issues the communal problem is proving to be the root difficulty. This problem is of course not peculiar to India but is one which has been only too familiar in the history of other countries. In recent years within the British Commonwealth it has caused troubles still unresolved in Ireland and Palestine, while within the European states set up after the last war

[1] The Congress demand for independence has been mentioned among the issues raised in the present complex controversy, but this really involves a question which lies outside the problem under examination in this chapter. Clearly in itself it gives no help towards settling the internal problems of an Indian constitution, nor can it be claimed that a concession of India's right to declare her independence would help to bring agreement between the various communities. The issue therefore more properly belongs to the later chapters dealing with India's place in the world and her relations with the British Commonwealth.

it led to rivalries and dissensions which offered the chief opportunities for the success of Hitler's power policy. Looking beyond these cases, it has created what at one time seemed insoluble problems in other parts of the British Commonwealth ; in Canada, for example, as between the British and French communities, or again in South Africa as between the Dutch and English. Lessons relevant to the Indian problem can be read from these cases, both from the unsolved difficulties and from the methods which have apparently produced solutions.

The essence of the problem lies in the question how to provide a satisfactory system of democratic government in a country where there is not a homogeneous community fluctuating between one political party and another, but a people divided into different communities (distinguished by race, religion, or some other binding tie) in which there is a permanent majority set against permanent minorities. A country, in short, in which " majority rule " would mean rule by the majority community. Both in India and England general opinion has for a long time drifted on in the direction of parliamentary government of the British pattern, taking sufficient account neither of how these difficulties would have to be met in the circumstances of India nor of the very special spirit and traditions which had been the conditions for the success of parliamentary democracy in England. The essential points in that spirit and traditions have already been briefly explained in Chapter I of this part. A certain attitude as between the majority and minority in Parliament is necessary, which really derives from the fact that there is always in existence an alternative administration able and willing to become the Government, but with no wish to disrupt the State. The Ministry supported by the majority knows in fact that at any time its supporters may, by the swing-over of the " shifting middle " of the electorate, become the minority ; and in these circumstances the majority tends to act with consideration to the minority, while, conversely, the minority

tends to acquiesce in the majority decisions. Moreover, beyond this, 'responsibility' as understood in England has implied more than mere responsibility to the parliamentary majority. There has been the further implication of responsibility first to the Crown to maintain the continuity of the National government, and secondly, to Parliament to preserve the dignity and authority of Parliament as an institution.[1] Those who are familiar only with the British system do not always realise what a formidable instrument of tyranny a government based on a parliamentary majority can be in a country composed of a dominant majority and permanent minorities.

There is a pregnant passage in the report of the Joint Select Committee which throws clear illumination on the position :

It is not unnatural that most of the constitutional schemes propounded by Indians should closely follow the British model. . . . But the successful operation of Parliamentary Government postulates beyond question the existence of certain conditions. It has been observed by a statesman of our own time (Lord Bryce) that "the English Constitution, which we admire as a masterpiece of delicate and complicated mechanism, would anywhere but in England be full of difficulties and dangers . . . it works by a body of understanding which no writer can formulate and of habits which centuries have been needed to instil". We think that Lord Bryce would not have denied that the understandings and habits of which he speaks are in the main the creation of, as they have in their term helped to promote, the growth of mutual confidence between the great parties in the State and of the fundamental belief, transcending the political differences of the hour, which each has come to have in the good faith and motives of the other. Many courses have contributed to this result, which has not been achieved without stress and effort, and even civil conflict ; and we shall be chary of giving credit to race or temperament for national characteristics which perhaps with equal justice may be attributed to the happy accident that we inhabit an island, and that for nearly a thousand years

[1] This point was very clearly made by Mr. Amery in the House of Commons during the Indian debate of April 22nd, 1941.

our political evolution has been undisturbed by the fact, and scarcely even the menace, of foreign invasion.

Parliamentary Government, as it is understood in the United Kingdom, is based essentially on the principle of majority rule, and majority rule is not a principle of government, unless the minority for the time being are willing to acquiesce in the decisions of the majority. The existence of organised political parties, each able and willing to take over the responsibilities of government when the time arrives, is perhaps so necessary for the efficient working of the system that it may also be regarded as an essential element in it. It is nevertheless a singular paradox that in England the party system is a successful instrument of government mainly because there is always a large body of opinion which, reacting instinctively against extravagant movements on one side or the other, preserves an equipoise and tends always to bring the vessel back to an even keel. In the absence of a central balancing force of this kind, there must always be the danger of a permanent majority and a permanent minority ; and since no room is left for compromise or adjustment, violent stresses are set up which, unless corrected or restrained, are sufficient to disrupt and even to destroy the State.

There are in India no parties as we understand them, and no mobile body of political opinion such as we have described. In their place we are confronted with the secular antagonism of Hindu and Muhammadan, representatives not only of two religions but of two civilisations ; with numerous self-contained and exclusive minorities, all a prey to anxiety for their future and profoundly suspicious of the majority and of one another ; and with the rigid and immutable divisions of caste, itself a denial and repudiation of every democratic principle. The only forces making for homogeneity or solidarity which we are able to discern are the beginnings of the idea of Indian nationality which we have already mentioned, and possibly also the sense of provincial citizenship, which in some Provinces, and perhaps in all, is of real and growing significance.

But none can predict whether either of these forces will in the end prove strong enough to absorb and obliterate the religious and racial cleavage, which indeed tends to become more and more acute with each successive transference of political power into Indian hands. Communal representation must be accepted as inevitable at the present time ; but it is

a strange commentary on some of the democratic professions to which we have listened. . . .

We recognise that if free play were given to the powerful forces which would be set in motion by an unqualified system of Parliamentary Government, the consequences might be disastrous to India and perhaps irreparable.

After reading this passage, one must naturally ask whether the constitutional plan recommended by the Joint Select Committee and finally settled by Parliament in the Act of 1935 went far enough to guard against the danger thus clearly envisaged. Communal electorates, protective powers vested in the Governor-General and Governors, and the constitution of the Federal Assembly as a body of representatives chosen not by popular election but by the Provincial Legislatures and State Rulers, all represent features introduced mainly for this purpose. Would these be enough ? What did the actual experience of the working of ministries under the 1935 Act prove in the sphere of provincial government ? In spite of many favourable features in that experience, the answer seems unavoidable that the movement of opinion among the various Indian communities since the passing of the Act has been such as to increase rather than lessen fears of the insufficiency in this respect of its provisions. These last words are deliberately chosen, for, in my view, it would be unfair to say that actual experience has proved the Act to be unworkable or that, given the necessary spirit of acceptance and co-operation, it could not provide a balanced and satisfactory constitutional machine.

But the reaction of the various parties which has been described in Part I must be accepted as a reality, and seeing that the 1935 plan may now, with the concurrence of the British Government, be thrown back into the melting-pot, it is more pertinent to ask, not whether its provisions are theoretically sufficient to guard against the danger of tyranny by the majority community, but rather what is to be done to provide against that danger, having regard to the conduct and professed policy of the Congress

party on the one side, and to the reactions of the minority communities and the Indian states on the other.

The whole tendency of the Congress party has been to insist more and more strongly on the principle of the " divine right " of the majority, and to focus its objections to the 1935 Act more particularly on the provisions which would have weakened the uncompromising application of that principle. The whole tendency of the principal minority — the Moslems — has been to show increasing apprehension of permanent Hindu majorities, and increasing determination to resist any such result. On the Congress side, some go so far as to allege that opposition to itself is confined to the upper strata of Moslem society and is so small numerically that it can without injustice be ignored. Others fall back on the argument that even if there is a clash it is more reasonable to allow the majority to decide than to concede to a minority the right permanently to hold up any decision. But this is no solution, since to point to a greater wrong does not justify the lesser.

And whatever the rights or wrongs of the matter, one cannot be blind to the experience of other countries that the parliamentary system is very vulnerable to the efforts of even a comparatively small minority which is willing to stick at nothing to subvert it. The Moslems are by no means a small minority, and, even without the danger of actual violence, a parliamentary system established over their heads and against their will would have small chance of endurance.

This is so essentially the crucial point of the whole Indian problem that, at the risk of wearying the reader, one may go over the ground again before reaching a final conclusion. Has the statement up to this point been fair to the Congress position ? The exponents of the Congress doctrine argue that there *is* no communal problem, or rather that there is room for all communities within Congress, and that in fact Congress does include all communities. One of the grounds, for example, on which it is said to

be difficult to get Mr. Gandhi to meet Mr. Jinnah is that he refuses to be put into the position of being the leader of one communal organisation meeting a co-equal. Presumably he regards any other political leader as a dissident from the true All-India organisation embracing all communities which is represented by Congress. Such a point of view cannot be rejected out of hand as *a priori* untenable. There *must* be some effort to preserve unity. There *is* a great danger of the whole force of Indian nationalist opinion disintegrating into unmanageable sectionalism. And if the Congress leaders were to say to the British Government, " Use your influence in collaboration with us to prevent this. Help us to keep India together, and we will discuss with you the constitutional measures, involving no doubt appreciable sacrifices and concessions on the part of the Hindu majority, which will be necessary to preserve a fair balance as between the divisions which will undoubtedly appear when the uniting force of the drive for self-government loses its power with the achievement of its object ", that would be a powerful appeal. But, on the one hand, nothing like that spirit has been shown by Congress, and on the other, it is impossible not to be impressed by the signs of acute division which actually exist. Indians may quarrel with the accuracy of the survey in Part I and refuse to accept many of its conclusions, but the main facts are inescapable — facts both in past history, such as the failure of the Indian representatives at the Round Table Conference, including Mr. Gandhi himself, to reach agreement among themselves on the communal franchise question,[1] and also of the present

[1] The following extract from a pamphlet by an Indian writer shows a by no means uncommon Indian view of the incident (*The Solution of the Indian Minorities Problem*, by R. B. Sapre) :

" Then, when the Indian Round Table Conferences were held in London, it was, perhaps rightly, presumed that eminent leaders of India like Aga Khan and Mahatmaji would not find it difficult, at any rate they would not fail, to come to some sort of permanent understanding, particularly in the calm and detached atmosphere of London, over the minorities problem and that *communal peace* would be finally perfectly established in the interests of the Indian Nationalism ; but unfortunately there in London

growing strength of the Moslem League. And surely the truth about the situation is that Mr. Jinnah has copied Congress methods in stirring up agitation, and that, whatever one may think of these methods, it is not open to Congress to say that in their own case these represent true democratic methods, but that for Mr. Jinnah they are factious and dishonest agitation.

And there is another line of thought which should be applied to the Congress attitude. Even if one admits the claim that Congress is not a communal organisation, it is impossible to avoid the fear that in the general attitude and conduct of the Congress party there lies a great danger to the development of any healthy form of parliamentary democracy in India. Recent events have demonstrated — and this has been clearly brought out in Part I of this book — what a dominating control is exercised by its central party caucus.

"The autocracy of a party machine, working through the outward forms of a parliamentary system, is . . . one of the natural perversions of democracy. When to the normal desire to carry victory over other parties is added a fanatical conviction that one party alone is fit to rule and embodies the only possible theory of government, then we are brought almost inevitably to the final conclusion that all other parties should be suppressed. It was the conclusion drawn by the Puritans in our own Civil Wars. It was the conclusion of the Terror in France. It was the conclusion which the Bolshevist leaders deliberately adopted from the outset and have carried

as well, all our Indian leaders miserably failed. Mahatmaji is a unique and a Himalayan personality and a great organiser and a big propagandist, but, it appears, he lacks those outstanding qualities of statesmanship which enable the statesman to do the right thing at the right moment.

"The failure, therefore, in London to come to terms with the minorities as well as with the Indian States' representatives, showed that none of the Indians assembled there rose to the height of such statesmanship. . . . It was really a very *discreditable affair* to all the assembled Indian leaders there that they could not come to terms between themselves in what was held to be a purely internal and domestic affair of theirs, and that they had to entrust this communal problem for its solution to the then Labour British Prime Minister, the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. It was thought that this arbitrationing by a third party would solve the problem and cure the Indian communal disease, but it did not."

through with a thoroughness which has destroyed every possible focus of resistance." [1]

These words were written without any reference to India, but no one can fail to be struck by the aptness with which they fit the attitude of Congress as defined in some of the pronouncements of its leaders. Such an attitude displayed by one party is clearly likely to evoke similar attitudes in rival parties, and in a country where there are lines of communal cleavage the rivalry, in all cases bitter, is likely to follow the lines of that cleavage and to become even more bitter and uncompromising. It seems true indeed to say of the Indian situation that, even if Congress did not start as a communal party, its attitude has inevitably given Mr. Jinnah the opportunity to build up a powerful rival political party on a communal basis. The trouble has therefore come to appear essentially as a communal one ; but those statesmen in India who desire to see established a true form of democracy would do well to recognise that there is more than the communal danger existing in the situation.

The conclusion is absolutely unavoidable — and this implies no sympathy with the views of the extremists on either side — that a very serious problem does exist and a very serious danger of the sort of clash which has become familiar in other countries. There are many public men and leaders of thought in India who accept this conclusion, and who have accordingly been endeavouring to frame plans to solve the problem. These plans fall broadly into two classes. The one class aims at finding a solution by introducing into the constitution specific measures to ensure fair representation to all communities in the executive tasks of government, and to lift the executive out of complete dependence on a parliamentary majority. The other class seeks to escape the difficulty by breaking up the units of government in such a way as to ensure fairly homogeneous communities in each unit.

[1] *The Forward View*, by L. S. Amery, 1935.

Plans for safeguarding Minorities by strengthening the Executive

As an illustration of plans of the former class, one put forward by a prominent Indian statesman may briefly be described. Its aim is to create a central executive which though not dependent on a popular elected assembly would nevertheless be closely connected with the main political parties and would sensitively reflect the mood of the country. It proposes to substitute for the large Federal Assembly of the 1935 Act a Council of thirty or forty members, elected by provincial legislatures and by the States and composed in such a way that each important interest in the country would be represented, and none would have a majority. From this council would emanate the central executive or cabinet, which would be selected from its members either by the Governor-General or by a prime minister who might himself be nominated by the Governor-General or elected by the Council for a fixed term. The selection of the cabinet would be subject to a statutory requirement that it should include representatives of the major parties and of the States, and also be composed in such a way as to give representation to all the main geographical regions. The members of the cabinet would serve for a fixed term, and would be responsible not to the Council but to the Governor-General; but so far as possible the cabinet would aim at establishing the closest harmony with the Federal Council, consulting it upon all questions of policy and moulding action according to its opinion. In the event of a deadlock between the executive and legislature, which would arise if the latter refused to pass the budget, the Governor-General would have the power to re-enact the budget of the previous year, thus enabling the executive, even if it could not command a majority, to continue in office, at least for a certain period. Since any constitution, however theoretically perfect, must in the conditions of India have at first a rather precarious life, and since the main chance of success lies in eliminating all avoidable causes of friction,

the plan envisages that the powers of the Federal Government would be limited to those essential for the maintenance of national security and unity, leaving all residual powers to the units of the federation. But it adds that, though the powers of the Federal Government would be thus limited, it should, within its limitations, be a strong Government, and its control over defence and foreign affairs should be absolute and undisputed.

The supporters of this plan argue that it is so adjusted that each party would have a share and none a monopoly of power, and that the fears of the minorities and of the States, the great obstacles to political peace, would thus be exorcised. They suggest that in a council as small as that contemplated the sense of responsibility would probably be greater than in a large assembly, and that this would tend to increase the solidarity of the executive and improve its relations with the legislature. They claim that it would be sufficiently a 'popular' government to satisfy the legislature, and that it would provide a form of democracy more in harmony with India's past traditions than a system copied from Westminster.

This plan obviously contains ideas which may prove of practical value, and perhaps the strongest argument in its favour is that it would probably be increasingly representative of local elements (Provinces and States) rather than of communities or political parties. Its disadvantages should also be frankly examined. The disadvantages, for example, of an irremovable executive were stated with considerable force in the report of the Joint Select Committee. The essential question is of course whether it is possible to provide an executive sufficiently independent of political parties as to be able to conduct its business without being paralysed by party manœuvres, and yet in sufficient touch and sympathy with them to retain its strength as a popular ministry. In answer to this it may be said that if the executive is a joint nominee of popularly elected ministries or legis-

latures it is entitled to claim that it too stands on a popular basis. In the United States the President is elected by a majority vote in a majority of States, not a majority vote of the nation, yet he is emphatically regarded as the most national institution. Another question is whether a government provided on such a system might not tend to pass in practice under the control of a small group of professional politicians, and so preserve most of the disadvantages, while losing some of the good points, of the present bureaucratic administration. Again, it may be asked whether it would be possible to secure cohesion and team spirit in a cabinet resulting not from voluntary association but from the compulsory coalition of such discordant elements as, say, Congress, Moslem League, Hindu Mahasabha, and the depressed classes. To this question it may be answered that a coalition — even though compulsory — with plenty of work to do and no continuous party pressure, might very well work quite happily, and that departmental and geographical issues might, in practice, be found to cut across communal and party ones and so keep the executive together. The legislature with its powers reduced might even cease to interest party organisations. It is also pertinent to note that in the four Provinces where parliamentary government is at this moment still being successfully carried on, the ministries are in fact coalition ministries. This is encouraging, and it is clear that, in spite of possible difficulties and objections, a plan such as that described does offer real hope of overcoming some of the difficulties.

It will, of course, be observed that the plan concerns only the Federal Government. That the provincial governments can continue successfully on the basis of the provisions of the 1935 Act is unfortunately not yet certain. In certain provinces where the minorities represent only a small percentage, the present form of parliamentary government may reach ultimate stability and success; but communal difficulties may prove intractable in others. Some modification in the position of the executive or in

the form of representation may therefore be necessary in the provinces also.[1]

Plans for safeguarding Minority Communities by Partition and Segregation : the Pakistan Plan

Of the class of plan which seeks to solve the problem of communal minorities by partition and segregation the most extreme form is the 'Pakistan' plan, which has already been described in Part I. This plan is now being advocated with increasing insistence. Many Moslems, probably a majority of them, still desire — whatever they may say in the heat of controversy — to remain within a united India ; but they desire, and still more fervently, protection for their own interests. The gospel of Pakistan is being preached widespread by a number of able, resolute, and devoted men ; and even some eminent Hindus are willing to contemplate Moslem secession as a possible way out of an intolerable situation. Failing some practicable alternative which satisfies at least their reasonable aspirations, the idea of Pakistan may so establish itself in Moslem hearts as to become in practice irremovable. It is of vital importance before this happens to search out the truth about what would be involved in these proposals. What precisely do they mean ? Are they practicable? And, if so, are they in the true interests of India?

Taking the last question first, can there be any doubt as to the answer, if the proposal really involves a division of India into two independent States? Can there be any doubt that such a division would be a major disaster ? Is not the unity of India the greatest achievement of the past 150 years ? That surely must be agreed in the conditions as we have known them, while, in the future that lies ahead, whatever may be the state of the world after the present war, it is safe to prophesy that conditions will be such as to make the political unity of India more than

[1] Proportional representation or functional representation might help. Or it might be made obligatory to have representatives of the different communities in every ministry.

ever important. The counterbalancing dangers must be grave indeed to make the device of dividing India the lesser evil.

But let us examine the practicability of the plan. It is difficult to believe that its sponsors have faced up to all the practical difficulties. For example, they have been unable to explain how exactly they could draw the boundaries of a Moslem state without leaving so many Hindus within and so many Moslems outside that the communal tension would be increased rather than lessened. Moslems are concentrated in the north-west of India and in Eastern Bengal, but between these areas lies the rich, densely populated, and predominantly Hindu region of the U.P., Bihar, and West Bengal. Is Pakistan thus to exist in two halves, with a Hindu corridor in between? Or is it to form a united whole, in which case it would become no other than a Moslem Empire, in area very much the same as the old Moghul Empire, and including among its subjects a Hindu population actually exceeding that of the Moslems. Critics of the scheme say that to adopt the first alternative would result in setting up a state so poor in resources as to be economically non-viable, with the result that it would inevitably seek to expand, and thus lead to war between Hindu and Moslem India. They point out, moreover, that while common language is the chief cement of the modern state, there would be no such binding material in Pakistan, since the language of the Moslems of Bengal is very different from the Urdu of the north-west. The economic interests of north-west and north-east India are, moreover, very divergent. Each, too, has a separate and serious defence problem. Thus Pakistan would be no more a national unit than the proposed All-India federation. Furthermore, they enquire what is to be the position of Hyderabad, which, though under a Moslem dynasty and in some respects regarded as the centre of Moslem India, has an overwhelmingly Hindu population. Other criticisms are that Pakistan would swallow up the Sikh

community, which numbers more than five millions, is intensely war-like, and by long tradition is the enemy of Islam. It would also be necessary to find some *modus vivendi* between Pakistan and the principalities which it would encircle, and whose rights have been guaranteed by the British Crown. (Those most concerned would be the Sikh dynasty of Patiala and the Hindu dynasty of Kashmir.)

Military considerations are, in the view of these critics, no less cogent. Even if separation were effected, the front line of defence of the Hindu population would continue to be the North-West Frontier, and the southerner would have as great an interest as the citizen of Pakistan to see that it was adequately held. But Pakistan, cut off from the revenues of the rest of India, would, it is alleged, be too poor to carry so heavy a responsibility.

Finally, there are the international problems. What would be the relation of Pakistan to Great Britain, and what would be the position of Great Britain in keeping peace between Pakistan and Hindu India? What kind of relations would exist between Pakistan and the Moslem powers of the Middle East? Would not the division of India, with all the friction which must ensue between the divided parts, be an invitation to the predatory powers which seek to incorporate India within their own special brand of a "New Order"? Would it not indeed be to take the first step to creating anew the conditions of the eighteenth century? In the world as it is to-day strength and security are to be best found in unity. Division might well prove a luxury to be paid for by becoming almost defenceless against the foreign aggressor.

These thoughts and questions bring to light a formidable list of uncertainties, problems, and dangers. And yet experience in other countries proves that if a superficially attractive idea is preached to men under the influence of nationalist or religious passion it may become so deeply seated in their minds that no cold arguments that it is impracticable will drive it out. And that leads,

as the history of Europe has shown only too clearly, to those permanent causes of friction, those insoluble problems which have vexed men's lives and led to ever-recurring wars, and in the end provided the pretext and the opportunity for some tyrannical power to gain a superlord's domination by force of arms. A grave responsibility indeed rests on those who, by unreasonable demands on one side or the other, are taking the risk of bringing such troubles on India.

Other 'Segregation' Plans

But the problem of the mixed communities remains, and to reject the idea of solving it by cutting India in two does not mean that it is not worth while to explore the possibility of easing it by less drastic measures for segregating the communities in units of local government. Some of the more moderate Moslems have attempted to work out a kind of compromise scheme which, while avoiding the division of India, would nevertheless give their community a measure of local autonomy. One scheme on these lines is associated chiefly with the name of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Prime Minister of the Punjab, whose moderating influence is one of the most valuable factors in India's political life. His guiding aim is that India should continue as a single federation but that its units should be more or less homogeneous in population, and that to these should be transferred some of the powers at present enjoyed by the centre. The project appears in a variety of forms, sometimes involving the alteration of existing boundaries and the creation of new provinces, sometimes no more than the grouping together of the provinces and states into zones which should be either predominantly Hindu or predominantly Moslem. But however such a plan is presented, one is faced with the essential difficulty of the existing intermixture of the communities in the various parts of India. The question that has to be asked is,

whether in these circumstances it is possible to create compact homogeneous units of adequate size without involving transfers of a population which would cause great hardship and be so alien to Indian sentiment as to create the danger of serious political trouble. Until this question is answered in relation to precise proposals it is not possible to form a judgment as to the extent to which plans of this kind might contribute to a solution. What can be said, however, is that the possibility of a rearrangement on these lines deserves most serious study, and that the problem might be eased by subdividing some of the existing Provinces into smaller units.

Other Measures for safeguarding Minority Interests

Besides constitutional arrangements of the two main kinds just discussed, there are other measures, more limited in scope but yet important, that can be taken to protect minorities. There is indeed more apprehension about the possibility of unfair treatment in the handling of the day-to-day executive business of government than in legislation. A familiar and important matter is the filling of appointments to the Government service — from the highest posts down to humble positions, say, on the State Railways. One has only to look through the lists of questions in the Indian legislatures or in the parliament of any country where there are two communities competing for fair distribution of such opportunities, to be impressed with the vast amount of political interest and heat that this question can engender. A convention satisfactory to all parties, administered by a Public Services Commission the impartiality of which is beyond question, may be a very important factor in the smooth working of any constitution. This is, of course, a familiar point, and there are many other matters of this kind to which attention should be devoted ; but it is not possible to complete an exhaustive list here. The handling of certain important economic activities by statutory authori-

ties outside political influence and carrying the public confidence — a matter which is referred to in the next section — may also be helpful.

Relations between the Provinces and the Indian States

We may turn next to the second of the main intrinsically Indian questions — the relations between the democratic Provinces of British India and the absolutist Indian States. On the one side the Congress party objects to the States joining the Federation unless they democratise their constitutions. On the other hand, many of the Princes may desire to remain aloof, and to continue in their present relation linked to India only through their treaties with the British Crown. They have become alarmed by the agitation against them by Congress, and they have begun to doubt the will or capacity of Great Britain to ensure that their rights will, after their accession, be properly respected.

It is not difficult to understand their apprehensions, especially of those Princes whose governments have maintained satisfactory standards but who have nevertheless been selected by Congress for persecution. Yet, looking at the position as a whole, it would be a very great loss, and a capital error of statesmanship, to abandon the policy of federating them with British India — a policy, be it remembered, of which the Princes themselves were the original proposers. A federal constitution holds out at once the hope of liberalising and modernising the administration of the States and of ensuring a greater stability in the political structure of the whole country. Moreover, so closely knit are now the economic and social life of the two divisions of India, and so intermixed with British India is state territory, that the setting up of a popular government at the centre in which the States did not participate must lead at the least to friction and difficulty. Again, as the Secretary of State recently observed, the States are in some ways the most characteristic part of the country, and a

régime to which they made no contribution would be by so much the less national. Lastly, in the interests of the Princes themselves, it may be urged that they would be well advised to put the foundations of their States on to a broader and less challengeable basis.

These are considerations which it may be hoped will weigh alike with all concerned and lead eventually to the welding of Indian and British India.

Relations between the Central Federal Authority and the Units

It remains to consider the third of the intrinsically Indian questions — the problem of the relations between the federal authority and the constituent units. This has been incidentally touched upon in dealing with the other two, but needs further treatment. The circumstances in which it is proposed to set up a federation in India are unique. In all other cases federations have arisen from conferences between still separate units.[1] In India the 'units' have been in the past combined under one authority — the Provinces in a unitary constitution under the British Government, and the States closely linked under the same supervision. The centrifugal impulse in such cases is normally strong, and in the consummation of other federations it has needed some strong outside influence, a threat from an external power, or some insistent and compelling experience of the disadvantages of complete separation — such as friction or frustration in the economic field — to bring the units to the point where each has been willing to sacrifice a part of its own free sovereignty for the sake of the advantages of common action. The history of the United States is particularly instructive,[2] and there could be no more striking illustration of the difficulties of bringing the units together than the fact that it

[1] Canada was a partial exception to this. Ontario and Quebec, previously united, were separated simultaneously with the bringing together of these two with the other North American provinces in a Federal Union.

[2] There can be few books which contain more interesting lessons for students of the Indian position than F. S. Oliver's *Life of Alexander Hamilton.*

required four years of bitter civil war finally to consolidate the Union. In all cases there has been acute controversy between those stressing the advantage of strong powers for the central authority and those standing for local sentiment.

If the unity of India is to be preserved in continuity, there is no means of escaping the special difficulty that the process of breaking up and the process of bringing together have to be undertaken simultaneously, and that the natural centrifugal impulses of the units will not be counter-balanced by any actual experiences of the difficulties involved for each in the attempt to maintain a completely separate existence. They can be warned in words or by the experience of others, but these methods are inevitably less convincing. These reflections, moreover, have a bearing on procedure. In India, so far, the approach has been from above and through All-India parties. Ought there not to be a reversion to the natural order, making the Provinces and States the starting-point of the discussion, and leaving them to treat the powers now exercised by the Central Government as held in trust pending a decision as to their distribution ? This question touches a very vital point and has a significance far beyond that of mere procedure. To many observers it seems that the chief hope of cutting across communal divisions and of bringing greater realism to constitutional discussions is to get out of the All-India party atmosphere and to give a leading part to the statesmen who have had practical experience of the responsibilities of government as premiers, ministers, and dewans in provinces and states, so that the issues may be handled with close reference to those practical functions of government which affect the welfare of the people, and under the uniting influences of common tasks and homely patriotism. To such observers, indeed, it has seemed that there could not be a less helpful method of approach to the real problems than through the abstract conceptions and power politics of the All-India parties. In a recent speech Sir Sikander Hyat Khan,

the Moslem Premier of the Punjab, said " India stands on the threshold of complete freedom if she will only settle her intercommunal problem ", and he went on to say, " In the Punjab there would be no Pakistan or Sikhistan or Hindustan ". To those who are trying to get down to the real problem such words come like a breath of fresh air. It is perhaps strange that, believing in the ideal of unity for All-India, one finds oneself welcoming words that may tend to encourage local patriotism, and one must of course recognise that sectionalism and inter-provincial rivalries have led to difficulties in other federations. But these are familiar difficulties that can be dealt with directly and by straightforward adjustments. It is in thrashing out such difficulties that India can 'find herself' and work out her destiny in the hands of realistic statesmen.

Parallel Problems in other Countries : Canada and South Africa

Before summing up the conclusions to be drawn from this survey of Inter-Indian problems, it is worth while to turn briefly to the experiences of other countries in the Commonwealth from which, as has already been noted, lessons of some value to India can be drawn. This study of analogous cases for the purpose of throwing light on the Indian problem deserves much fuller treatment than can possibly be attempted here, and it would be a valuable contribution if a constitutional historian would undertake it.

The cases of Canada and South Africa are often quoted in connection with all the three main issues that have to be considered for India, the communal problem, the plan for federation, and the relations with the United Kingdom. There is quite a commonly held impression, for example, that in both these cases difficult problems under all three heads were solved by a bold grant of self-government and the establishment of parliamentary systems. It is accordingly easily concluded that it only needs similar boldness with India to produce the same results, and that indeed fits in with all that is preached by the Congress party. A closer

study of the history in each case, however, shows that this conclusion is not fully justified, and beyond this negative conclusion there are many lessons of positive value to be gained from these examples.

In the territory now included in the Dominion of Canada the communal problem caused most friction in the first half of the last century. The seat of trouble was the Province of Canada, which then covered what are now the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Quebec was predominantly French-speaking, while Ontario had become, as the result of British immigration, predominantly English, and the famous Durham reforms, which introduced responsible government in Canada, fused the two provinces with the avowed object of using the system of parliamentary government to enable a British majority thus artificially created to prevail over the French community. The point to note is that this attempt led after less than two decades to complete deadlock, the friction between the communities being such that no stable parliamentary government could be kept in power. In consequence radical reform was needed, and the solution was found by once more dividing Ontario and Quebec into separate legislative units and uniting these two together with other British North American provinces in a single federation. The French of Quebec were thus made completely masters in their own house. Thenceforward communal dissension has been much less, and the parliamentary system in the federation has worked satisfactorily. But it is of importance to grasp what a fortunate conjunction of circumstances there has been to make this possible. In the first place, the French have been to a high degree concentrated in Quebec, while the French minorities in the other provinces are small, and therefore the minority problem in these provinces has not been acute. Secondly, in the federal sphere, it has been a happy accident that the two main British parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, have been relatively evenly balanced, and the French have, in consequence, as a third party, been in

the position of being courted by each of the other two. Thirdly, it is undeniable that Canada has, at least in the past eighty years, shown an unusually good record for mutual toleration and self-restraint on the part of the great body of its citizens.

These three factors have gone to make the success of the parliamentary system in Canada. Even to-day, however, it cannot be said that the communal storm is quite allayed, and it is only by the continuance of tact and moderation that the Canadian system can continue to work smoothly. Moreover, it is worth noticing with what tenacity the French cling to two important safeguards — first, the right of appeal to the British Privy Council; secondly, the requirement that fundamental changes in the Canadian constitution shall be made by the British, not the Canadian parliament.

So much for the communal problem in Canada. As to federation, it is notable that its discussion began in 1864, and that it was completed by the passing of the British North American Act in 1867. There were special reasons for this comparatively rapid consummation. There were deep fears at that time of annexation by the United States unless the Canadian provinces were united. The American Civil War also led Canadians to fear that, unless a federation were effected, there might be a similar catastrophe one day in Canada. In addition, there were economic reasons. Railway development especially was being held up for want of a central authority.

This story throws an interesting light on the Indian problem. But there are important distinguishing factors, the chief one being that the Moslem community in India is not concentrated as were the French in Quebec. One is left with many questions. Is there any hope of ultimately creating in India the psychological atmosphere which has been so helpful in Canada? Could the Moslem party play a balancing rôle like the French Canadians in Federal affairs? What would the Congress party say to the safeguard given by the English to the French in Canada

of making Westminster the final arbiter for any constitutional change?

The story of the Union of South Africa is somewhat different. There the Afrikander Dutch (about 60 per cent), British (35 per cent), and Jews (5 per cent) compose a white community of about 2 millions, which is balanced against a non-European population of 8 millions (African natives (Bantu), nearly 7 millions; mixed Cape coloured folk, about 750,000; Indians, about 220,000). Prior to the South African war of 1899–1902 plans for federation between the British colonies came to nothing, but the termination of the independence of the Boer republics created a new situation, and the Union Government was set up in 1909. In addition to the native problem and the strong interest of the white population to work together in relation to that problem, there were exceptional economic forces driving towards a Union. Of the four co-terminous independent states, two were without sea frontiers, so that the distribution of customs revenue and control of transport created problems which could not be fairly settled without union. Common interests in agricultural matters, such as control of locusts and animal disease, pressed in the same direction. Simultaneously the situation in Europe, which was menacing from the early years of the Union, tended to be a uniting force.

The story of South Africa is interesting in many ways. It brings out how outside causes may prove a compelling force to bring independent states and mixed communities together. It provides an example, too, of the effects of a liberal policy when applied to people led by statesmen of broad vision and generous temperament. It would, indeed, be hard to find a parallel for the bold leadership in the cause of the British Commonwealth given in 1914 by the two statesmen and generals (Botha and Smuts) who only ten years before had been leaders in war against it. Then, too, in this and other ways, such as the work of Lord Milner with his staff of keen and intellectual young men, it shows how events can be influenced by individuals,

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and for how much the personal qualities of a few men can count. Lastly, the methods employed in the preparation for, and the final consummation of, the Union illustrate the value and necessity of careful dispassionate and scientific study of the real problems *before* the assembly of any convention to settle a new constitution.[1]

On the whole, then, the story of South Africa may be regarded as one to encourage hope, above all the hope that India, too, will produce leaders whose personality will overcome intrinsic difficulties. There is the hope, too, that even out of the evils of the present war good may come, and that the realisation of the need for mobilising all efforts to defeat the menace of German world-tyranny may prove a uniting force in India. But it would be unwise to see only the hopeful signs in South Africa. The story contains warnings too. The communal rivalry is not finally allayed, and over it all hangs like a cloud the unsolved problem of the relations between the white and black races. In the South African or Union party British and Dutch under the leadership of General Smuts have co-operated on cordial terms, but all the time there has existed an intensely nationalist section of the Dutch whose aims have avowedly been political domination over the British. Hitherto this party has been unable to mobilise its power owing to internal dissensions. Perhaps in this there lies an element of hope if it can be held to show that a constructive policy aimed at benefiting the country as a whole is a more powerful uniting force than one which is based only on racial rivalry. Perhaps here, too, is a lesson for India.

[1] It is worth recording that — according to some of those who shared in the preliminary study — F. S. Oliver's *Life of Alexander Hamilton*, had a profound influence on several of the men who played a leading part in settling the plan. The experiences of the United States and Hamilton's arguments in favour of a form of government as centralised as possible may be said to have operated powerfully in influencing the final decision in favour of Union rather than Federation.

Procedure

It remains to consider procedure. If the Act of 1935 is to be replaced by a plan commanding fuller support from India, by what sort of body and with what procedure is that plan to be hammered out, reviewed, and ratified ?

At one period in the story of this controversy Congress placed in the forefront of its programme the demand that the constitution should be settled by a Constituent Assembly of Indian representatives elected on an adult franchise and sitting in India. " Promise us this," said Mr. Gandhi, " and all will be well." Since then, in the Viceroy's Declaration of 8th August 1940, the British Government has conceded the main principle of this demand, the principle, that is to say, that India's new constitution should be framed primarily by Indians in India and " should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic, and political structure of Indian life," subject only to the proviso that a plan is devised which would not be repudiated by large or powerful elements in Indian national life. This was a statement of immense importance, yet it has — as so often happens to concessions — received very little attention from the Indian side. It certainly ought to provide the basis for an agreed procedure, but it cannot do that without a reasonable attitude as between the various parties. It is obvious that the settling of the representation of the various communities on the constitution-making body will raise just those difficulties which have to be faced for settling a fair balance in the constitution itself. When the proposal of a Constituent Assembly was under discussion, Congress sought to reassure the Moslems' fears by undertaking that in matters relating to Moslem culture and religion it would leave the decision to the Moslem members. That, however, did not satisfy the Moslems, because they were able to find no common ground between themselves and Congress as to what subjects would in fact be treated as matters relating to Moslem culture and what as funda-

mental matters of the constitution. The truth is that the fears of the minority communities as to what may result from the permanent domination of a majority extend far beyond matters of religion and culture, since the influence might be felt in every channel where the members of a government can exercise executive power.

These have not been helpful beginnings, but it is surely as clear as noonday that this matter of constitution-making means dealing objectively with hard and complex problems so that the first stage, at least, of procedure must be a matter for brains and not for votes. The present Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, reviewed this question in his Convocation Address at Benares Hindu University on 23rd December, 1939 — an address which deserves to become a classic on this and many other matters. Turning over the pages of history he showed how Constituent Assemblies elected on a wide franchise, " which have sought to combine the securing of unity among diverse elements with the writing of the new constitution itself," have failed in the past. And then he showed the happier results in other cases where " the body which hammered out the scheme consisted of a very small number of delegates ", and where, though " there were difficulties to be overcome, there was no organised body of opinion which either refused to co-operate or which recorded its dissent from the scheme ultimately adopted ".

It is surely a first essential in the present case that the brain-work of planning a constitutional framework should be undertaken in a calm and scientific atmosphere between men who need not worry about bargains and popular support at each stage, but who are determined to go through to the end and produce what is intrinsically the best plan — complete and balanced — which then could be put before a constituent body for discussion and ratification. The point has already been made in an earlier section that the most hopeful atmosphere for such preliminary discussion would be created if full weight were given to the point of view of men who have had practical

experience in the provincial governments and the States. The preliminary approach as well as the final discussion should be essentially that of representatives of these units asking themselves, " How can we come together to set up a Central Authority which will have adequate powers to preserve the unity of India, but will leave the units free to work out according to their own conditions those tasks on which the welfare of the people depend ? " This has been the approach in the case of other federations, and it must always be remembered that the problem is not only to find means to preserve a fair balance among the communities, but also to build up the right relations between the units and the Central Government.

If it is essential that preliminary brain-work on a constitutional plan should be done before there can be any useful discussion in a large representative assembly, it is a matter of equal importance that such brain-work should start now, without delay. It has been said that there are difficulties in constitution-making during war. There may perhaps be difficulties about final ratification, but there can be no reason why the preparatory work in India should not start at once, and if, as a result, there were produced a scheme which commanded general agreement in India, there would be a very strong case indeed for pressing the British Government to play its own part without delay in the final consummation.

Conclusions on Inter-Indian Problems

The foregoing paragraphs have sketched the problems and possible lines of solution. But in the end it has to be said that no constitutional plan will be of avail unless it commands general agreement. This truth can hardly be better stated than in the words of Sir Maurice Gwyer in his Benares address to which I have already referred :

> The idea of a social contract is no doubt a fiction, but the philosophers who expounded it had at least grasped the truth that a political society, if it is to have a chance of life, must originate in the common agreement of those who compose it.

I speak of a society self-contained and self-governing; for history can provide examples enough of societies of another kind which have existed for long periods, perhaps even for centuries, when held together by a strong hand, whether domestic or foreign. But a self-contained and self-governing State cannot survive if the elements which compose it are unwilling bed-fellows. The strains and stresses which a compulsory partnership sets up will in the end prove fatal. The world is strewn with the ruins of paper constitutions which failed because they ignored this simple truth; and many of the evils of Europe to-day have arisen from the creation of States with an artificial unity, where a façade of constitutional safeguards and the buttress of solemn guarantees have served, if only for a time, to conceal the hollowness of the internal structure. A constitution is not to be drafted on assumptions, for in so vital and fundamental a matter the results of one false step are incalculable. Let a constitution be made, it is sometimes said, and in the sunshine of our content all differences will vanish like the morning mists. So too the unwilling bride may be persuaded that the affection which she does not feel will follow marriage. Sometimes it may, but if it does not, how disastrous to the union are the consequences and how irretrievable!

Seeing that a plan to be of any value must be thrashed out among Indians themselves, I deliberately avoid any attempt to formulate precise and complete proposals, and confine myself to stating certain broad conclusions which seem to emerge from the survey in this chapter and in Part I. Broadly, then, it seems clear that a system of parliamentary democracy such as that which has been developed and worked hitherto in England (essentially on a two-party basis) is not likely to be suited to India's needs — certainly not for the Central or Federal Government, and probably not for the Provinces either. If a constitution appropriate to such a system were set up, it would almost certainly develop on quite different lines. India needs to work out her own plan to suit her own special conditions, studying her own history and studying also the various forms of democratic constitutions which have been developed in other countries. The key point

is the structure of the executive, and the most hopeful line seems to be to set up some form of executive which, while resting broadly on popular support, is nevertheless independent of day-to-day shifts and changes of opinion in the elected legislatures, and which is also so composed as to give representation to various interests. For the Central Legislature the representation should be essentially that of the units — the Provinces and States — in the hope that the unifying influence of local interests may bridge the fissures of communal cleavage. On the grounds stated in the text there appear to be strong arguments for limiting the Central Chambers to comparatively small numbers. As an expedient, it is possible that the communal tangle may be eased by some arrangement of the boundaries of units which will further segregate the various communities, and there might be other advantages in breaking up some of the very large provinces into units more manageable in size and more homogeneous. But there are many counter-considerations, and proposals of this kind cannot be tested until worked out in concrete detail, so that all their reactions can be clearly seen. Lastly, it may serve to counteract the danger of over-centralisation, and at the same time have advantages both in easing communal tension and bringing back interest to the life of the countryside, if the administrative structure is so designed as to give the greatest possible scope to units of local government right down to the villages.

There is one more point which deserves very special attention — and that is the possible importance of the function of the Crown in an Indian constitution. In the British system, as has already been pointed out (p. 350), the " responsibility " of Ministers has a threefold meaning — not merely responsibility to a Parliamentary majority, but also, secondly, to Parliament to preserve the dignity and authority of Parliament as an institution, and, thirdly, to the Crown to maintain the continuity of national government. This third 'facet' of responsibility is of real importance, and although India may require a

constitution differing from the British, nevertheless, if that is to be a democratic constitution working democratically, this potential function of the Crown may be even more significant in the conditions of Indian society than it is in Britain itself. The more the Indian position is studied, the more clearly does it seem to emerge that some focus for personal loyalty is needed as well as some impartial arbitral authority. It seems further to be clear that this function must be embodied in a personality which can be regarded as standing for the interests of the whole nation rather than as one whose position depends on votes which might be votes of a majority composed mainly of one political party or community.[1] For creating a united India — including the Indian States — a recognition of the function of the Crown as something real, even if indeterminate and latent, may prove to have a decisive value.[2]

[1] It is difficult, for example, to imagine that India in her present state could produce by popular election a figure which could be accepted as representing the nation in the same way as does the President of the United States.

[2] The treatment of the whole problem in the text is deliberately suggestive rather than exhaustive. This particular point about the function of the Crown deserves much fuller examination than can be attempted here. It is important to appreciate that in the British System, the Crown is not only a symbol, but also, in the last resort, an impartial arbiter embodying the national tradition and entitled, in the interests of that tradition, to overrule the executive of the day if it threatens to violate the tradition. This latent power has not been exercised in the United Kingdom for generations, but it remains and has a real influence. In the Dominions, however, there have been occasional recent illustrations of its use (see for some recent cases of which the facts are public knowledge Evatt's *The King and his Dominion Governors*, pp. 55-64, 120-36, 157-74, and 178-84. Since these cases there has also been that at the beginning of the present war when the Governor-General of South Africa refused General Hertzog's request for a dissolution). What is notable in these recent cases in its bearing on the modern conception of Dominion Status is that the representative of the Crown in exercising his latent power has done so on his own discretion and has deliberately refrained from consulting the British Government— (*i.e.* the Secretary of State for the Dominions). All this may be very significant for the Indian Constitution. " But ", it might be said, " according to the spirit of the British Constitutional Monarchy the powers of the Crown are latent and unwritten, and their possessor is not concerned with any executive task of government, whereas, according to the 1935 Act, the Governor-General in India not only was to have wide discretionary powers which were specifically defined, but also executive powers in connection with the reserved services (defence and foreign

4. Issues between Britain and India

Having thus surveyed the intrinsically Indian problems, it remains to consider those special matters which arise concerning British responsibilities and interests in India. I have deliberately left these to the last, to be treated almost as a mere appanage to the main problem. The fact is, that all these matters will fall into their proper place and become much easier to handle if only the major problem of finding a basis for a constitution agreed between the various Indian parties, communities, or states has been solved.

policy). Even if the discretionary powers are accepted, his possession of executive powers, to be exercised in responsibility to the British Government, is inconsistent with his character as representative of the Crown." Here again the experience of the Dominions is interesting as showing that there have been parallels for this duality. In South Africa, for example, the Governor-General was, until recently, responsible to the British Government for the direct administration of certain native protectorates within the Union, for correspondence between the British Government and the Union Government, and for the fulfilment of certain obligations by the Government of Southern Rhodesia for its treatment of the natives. These functions have now been divided to the extent that the administration of the Protectorates and the diplomatic relations between the Union Government and the British Government are now in the hands of a High Commissioner. This gradual change of the functions of the Governor-General in South Africa perhaps indicates the kind of evolution which might be followed in India. There are, of course, special features in the Indian situation, since in India there is not only the question of the " reserved services " but also of providing some measure for carrying on the relationship with any States that may not join the Federation, as well as with those that may join but would still in certain respects look to the British authority for protection. Nevertheless, a parallel process of evolution can be envisaged. Some of these matters might ultimately be covered by an appointment corresponding to the High Commissioner in South Africa, while the position as regards the " reserved services " would be made easier by making them (as I have suggested in Chapter III and in the following section of this chapter) the subject of an extra-constitutional agreement. During the transitional stage the performance of any such agreement would doubtless have to be assured by vesting in the Governor-General some constitutional powers in connection with its provisions. Without going into further details, the final conclusion seems to be that the whole problem must be looked upon as one of transition and evolution. The plan for evolution would look forward to a final stage in which the discretionary powers of the representative of the Crown would be limited to the safeguarding of the constitution itself, but in the transitional period would include the power to safeguard the interim provisions.

The objections which have been raised to the proposals of the 1935 Act in the field of British responsibilities and interests concern mainly, as has already been observed, the reserved powers and 'safeguards'. These are often referred to loosely under one heading; but in reality their purposes fall into very distinct classes. The special powers exercisable by the Governor-General and Governors for the safeguarding of minority interests raise questions which fall essentially within the sphere of Inter-Indian issues. Here is obviously a matter which depends mainly on getting a constitutional plan agreed among Indians. Once that is achieved, the whole question of safeguarding powers will appear in a totally different light. Beyond these, the reserved powers and safeguards are broadly of three kinds. First, there is the reservation of power in the matter of defence and foreign policy. Secondly, there are certain powers of intervention given to the representatives of the Crown which can perhaps be described as safeguards against Indian ministers failing to perform their duties properly. This covers the power of intervention to preserve financial stability (coupled with the appointment of a Financial Adviser) and to maintain law and order. Lastly, there are certain provisions inserted to safeguard trading and business interests. It is regrettable that in general discussion anything like parity of importance should have been given to these three classes of provisions.

Defence is a matter of supreme practical importance for which special provisions are necessary because of the inescapable reality that India, for the present at least, cannot alone provide what is necessary for her own security on land and sea. That has been dealt with in the preceding chapter, and the plan there outlined aimed at finding a method by which the realities of the situation could be met without being made a pretext for altering the framework of India's constitution. This plan need not be here re-stated, but it is necessary now to add that foreign policy is so essentially a function of defence that

it is hardly possible to differentiate the treatment of the two subjects. It is to be hoped that if defence were covered by an extra-constitutional Convention running for fixed periods representing progressive stages of advance, and with an Indian minister associated throughout with the working of the Convention and the handling of the wider aspects of defence, it should be possible to devise a parallel arrangement covering foreign policy during a limited transitional period which would be acceptable to Indian opinion.

In the case of the other two kinds of reservation there would appear to be room for going a long way to meet the Indian point of view.

The matter of finance is vital. There can be no real responsibility of government without responsibility for finance, and once the decision has been taken to tip the balance of responsibility of government on to the Indian side, it must be asked whether it is not both futile and self-contradictory to suggest that a controlling or safe-guarding hand should be kept on financial responsibility. There is a great deal to be said against half-measures in a matter of this kind. All experience seems to show that the exercise of responsibility has a sobering effect. But for that it must be real responsibility. To transfer the initiative to a minister, and yet make him feel that there is a power in the background which carries the responsibility for stepping in to prevent him doing anything very stupid, is likely to produce either irresponsibility or friction.

Plain speaking is necessary on these issues and the considerations which ought to influence opinion must be squarely faced. It may be said that British financial administration, alike in England and in India, has in the past observed certain principles and standards which have justified themselves on grounds both of morality and expediency. But when one turns to consider the ability with which the principles have been applied, unqualified commendation becomes more difficult. There certainly

is no justification in the experience of the years since the last war for arguing that British officials have a kind of inspired ability which no Indian ministers or officials will be found to equal. To impose safeguards on the ground of differences in ability is an untenable position.

But that does not dispose of the whole matter. It is not merely a question of ability but of principles and intentions ; and in view of much that has been said recently in India, Indians can hardly be surprised if on the British side there exist doubts and a need for re-assurance. A great deal of the Congress literature has been devoted to representations that unjustifiable and intolerable financial burdens have been placed on India by the British administration, and the doctrine has been preached that it will be the right and even the duty of a national Indian Government to repudiate the public debt and other obligations incurred by the Government of India. The British Parliament cannot be expected to ratify a constitution granting self-government with full powers over financial policy to India unless this matter is cleared up. It would be useless for me to attempt to disguise my own view that a great deal of nonsense has been written in India about the crippling of the country by heavy and unjustifiable public borrowings. In fact, there is no country in the world which has a better record or a sounder position as regards its public debt than India, covered as it is almost entirely by productive assets.

It may well be that, as a result of Congress preachings, Indian opinion has been genuinely misled on this matter, and there is much to be said for having a review of the whole position carried out by an authoritative Commission which the Indian public could regard as entirely disinterested.[1] But after such a review there must be no

[1] In his last book, *The Unity of India*, which has just been published, Jawaharlal Nehru has said that India, if she achieved her freedom, " would not look unfavourably to certain privileges in the matter of trade and commerce being granted to Britain. *She might even accept certain financial burdens which in justice should not fall on her.* We would be willing to pay this price for freedom with peace." This passage is set in a context which

further question of repudiating India's just obligations in the matters of debt, pensions, etc. If the new constitution of India is to be finally confirmed by a representative Indian body sitting in India, then assurances for honouring these obligations must be given and ratified by such a body. If defence is covered by a Convention on the lines which I have proposed, then the provision of the necessary funds to support the arrangements agreed to would be included among India's acknowledged and ratified obligations.

Beyond this there are other steps which should be considered by Indians themselves for 'safeguarding' the financial position. The need for considering these steps arises not because there is to be a transfer of responsibility to Indians, but because the control of finance would be passing into the hands of a political minister dependent in some degree at least on the popular vote. There are certain dangers in the financial and commercial field which should be faced and guarded against. Indian opinion is fully conscious of these dangers. They are not peculiar to India, but arise from the fact that the political pressure of sectional interests is a factor to be reckoned with. There is much in the experience of other countries which could be quoted to illustrate the point, and Indians will be very wise to include in their constitutional arrangements provisions that certain matters such as the control of currency operations, the regulation of tariffs, the management of State railways and other State undertakings, should be put in the hands of statutory bodies, composed of men of the highest ability, whose careers lie outside the field of politics. This does not mean that the power to control the main lines of policy would not in the last resort remain with the government of the day,

contains so much which evokes my sympathy that I do not wish to be critical. But I must protest very strongly against the suggestion that the British people want India to agree to anything more than is fair and just. Moreover, to imagine that British reluctance to give way wholly to Congress demands is based on British interests, or could be bought off by commercial concessions, is totally to misread the situation.

but it does mean that on every proposed move of policy there would be available to the public and to the legislature the opportunity to get an appreciation of the position based on the views of disinterested men of practical experience.

We may turn next to the proposed provisions for reserving to the representatives of the Crown power to intervene in matters of law and order. On this matter the most useful and practical commentary is supplied by the actual experience of the working of provincial government under the 1935 Act. This showed that Governors could exercise a helpful influence without interfering with the liberty of ministers to pursue their chosen policies. These powers should be regarded as projections of the functions of the Crown as embodied in the British Constitution. In the transitional period they may be more precise and connect the Crown through its representatives in India more definitely with executive responsibilities than is the case in England, but the natural evolution will be to the British stage which retains in the Crown no more than a latent power to preserve the constitution itself. This is the course of evolution which has been and is being followed in the Dominions (see p. 378 and footnote).

Lastly there is the class of safeguards concerned with protecting British commercial interests against discriminatory treatment. The degree of protection actually proposed in the 1935 Act may be reasonable enough, and the issues may be of serious moment to those concerned ; but they are of a totally different nature and order of importance from such matters as the safety of India or the securing of a fair balance between the Indian communities. Moreover, one must ask whether the idea of building into a fixed constitution provisions for protecting business interests does not imply a conception of security for such interests which has in fact become non-existent in every other part of the world. One must ask too how such safeguards could be made to prevail against a strong

force of Indian opinion, and what would be the effect of attempting to do so. A sense of proportion and realism surely points to the conclusion that British investors and traders in India ought (if only in their own interests) to rely rather on the more normal methods of reciprocal trade conventions freely concluded, and to seek their essential safeguard for fair treatment in proving that their activities are of value to the country.

If the issues between Britain and India were handled in the spirit indicated in the preceding paragraphs, it is perhaps not too much to hope that these would disappear from the catalogue of major difficulties.

5. Summary and Conclusions

My aim in the foregoing sections has been to present the problem clearly, and, above all, to insist that the two sides of it — the Inter-Indian issues and those between Britain and India — must be seen separately. I have stressed, too, another point, which has been so much emphasised in the recent public utterances of British statesmen, that the prime need now is for Indians to agree among themselves as to the form of the constitution which they want. All this is logically unanswerable, and it is indeed necessary to sort out the issues logically in this way, since otherwise there can be nothing but the troubled waters of confused thought in which political agitators can fish with satisfaction and success. But in practice these clear-cut logical distinctions cannot be fully preserved, and some mixture of the issues is inevitable. In fact, we have got to feel our way forward and at each step help each other. My own belief is that the constitutional problem cannot be completely or finally solved in advance. I believe that the essential thing is to get down to the practical work, and that, in the handling of the actual tasks, solutions for what look like intractable problems will be found, while new problems hitherto

unforeseen may reveal themselves.[1] The tasks which need tackling first are those constructive social and economic tasks which I have described in Chapter II. They need tackling first for many reasons. Not only are they the tasks which affect the welfare of the people, which indeed should be the first objective of government and the final test of good government, but also in the process of their accomplishment lies the hope of building up, through the advancement and education of the masses, the only sure foundation for real democracy in India. Lastly, practical co-operation on these tasks is likely to create ties uniting all parties and cutting across communal divisions. If, then, I had the power to influence men's thoughts, these are the thoughts that I would put into Indian minds : " Let us not attempt to solve this whole problem in one step. Let us first clear the way for the constructive tasks of Government in the field of Provincial and State administration. We already have the constitutional power to do this, but to reinforce that we in India also need to have the handling of finance and all economic policy in the Central Government so that we may have a concerted All-India policy. As regards defence and foreign policy, we can work in partnership with the British Government in the first stage — provided it is clear that that does not mean merely marking time, but that a progressive plan leading up to the full transfer of responsibility on to our shoulders is inaugurated, and that we have the means of watching that it is carried out. If the continued partnership (for these special purposes) of the British authority in the first stages of central administration serves to reinforce the

[1] In saying this I do not forget the views expressed by Sir Maurice Gwyer in the quotation which I have given on p. 375. But I venture to this extent to disagree with them. A marriage of people hopelessly incompatible may indeed, as he says, be doomed to disaster ; but no marriage would ever take place if the contracting parties sought to assure themselves in advance that they would never quarrel, or, alternatively, to provide safeguards against every possible form of unreasonable action by one or the other. Nor would any marriage prove successful without a spirit of give and take and the comradeship which is built up in the course of handling life's problems together.

confidence of the Minorities and States that there will still be an independent authority to watch the fair working of the relations between the various Indian interests, so much the better, since this may help us all to make the first start in general agreement."

Doubtless thoughts thus phrased will arouse suspicion in some Indian minds, but I believe that most, if they are honest with themselves, will feel that they contain elements of wisdom.

CHAPTER FIVE

INDIA AND THE WORLD

I

THE attempt has been made in the earlier chapters of this book to see the constitutional questions in relation to the actual problems of administration and government. But it is not enough to study only domestic conditions ; relations with the surrounding world are of no less account.

Here, of course, more obviously than at any other point, one is brought up against the difficulty of depicting the situation or reaching any conclusions at the present moment while the face of the whole world is changing in an upheaval the course and end of which no man can foresee. Moreover, at the time of writing it seems that the greatest need is to emphasise the realities of the war, for there has hitherto been a tendency to discuss India's problem as though she were still set in a peaceful and secure world, and could afford to carry on with internal dissensions, muddling along to a final solution without any danger of rough and inexorable interference from outside — almost like a family arguing about how to run the house while gangs of armed robbers are approaching from all sides threatening either to break in to pillage and seize it, or if they fail in that, to create conditions in which quiet family life as we have known it will be something no longer possible, something to which men can only look back as a golden age of the past which, for the time at least, has disappeared from a grim and ruthless world.[1]

[1] If the general public in India — so concentrated on their internal problems, so far from Europe, and in the past century so sheltered from external stress, should have failed hitherto to grasp the realities of the

It may be that, before these words are published, the unfolding of the war plans of our enemies will have shocked all classes throughout India into a new realisation of the threats and perils which surround her. But, however near the threat of actual attack may come to India, it will still remain necessary to appreciate in their true significance the forces and tendencies which have led to the war and which may remain at work when it is over. It will be necessary, too, to preserve a sense of proportion and a faith that, however the temporary fortunes of war may sway, there will ultimately emerge conditions in which all those nations that are now ranged against the Totalitarian States, whether in the East or the West, will play a powerful part in reshaping the world. It is in that faith that this survey is continued and that we may turn to consider the general setting in which India will have to take her place.

2

The experiences of the past twenty years culminating in the present war have demonstrated vividly that no nation can secure for itself freedom to work out its own destiny regardless of the policies of other countries. Many factors have been at work. Amongst these, scientific advances have played an important part, and history will accord to the inventions of the internal combustion engine and wireless transmission a significance, so far indeed much less beneficent, but no less profound than the introduction of the printing press. The speeding-up of transport, the development of air travel and radio communication, have diminished the space of separation and converted distant countries into uncomfortably jostling neighbours; while these inventions, combined with the development of mechanical instruments of war for which they have

international situation, that can hardly be surprising when one recalls the course of British public opinion almost up to the outbreak of war, or if one studies even to-day some of the debates which are allowed to take up the time of the British Parliament.

equally been used, have made it possible for determined leaders not only to impose rigid control on vast populations but to wield a compelling power of arms with a swiftness and over a range undreamed of in the past. Aristotle, discoursing on the science of politics, saw in the difficulties of communication a limiting factor on the expansion of governments dependent on popular support; and he asked, if the numbers governed passed a certain limit, what herald who had not the voice of the mythical Stentor could address them? To-day it is a commonplace for any leading world figure to speak in his own voice to many millions spread all over the globe. It is a far cry to the days of Aristotle, but it is barely a generation since the vast differences brought about by these new appliances have altered the whole range of power politics, and the whole nature of international relations. Not less remarkable than the inventions themselves has been the development of the technique of the Totalitarian Power State which has exploited them, and of the ruthless philosophy or ideology which lies behind it. Lastly, there must be noted the concurrent, less spectacular, but hardly less significant developments in the economic field which have been sketched in the first section of Chapter Two. These, as there explained, led to maladjustments of potential productive and consumptive power, to the consequent search in many countries for increased economic self-sufficiency, and in the final result to an economic malaise which weakened and absorbed the attention of the democratic 'Welfare States' and largely contributed to the opportunity of the Totalitarian 'Power States' to build up their prestige and military strength.

One lesson which it is possible to read into all these experiences is that man has not risen morally to the opportunities which his brain has created. It is a melancholy fact that the powers over nature which science has given him have been much less effectively exploited for good than for evil purposes. Thus it may be said that of the economic maladjustments the primary cause has been,

in many cases at least, some scientific advance — the invention of a new machine, or the breeding of a new variety of wheat or other crop — which has enormously increased the potentialities of production, but has been balanced by no corresponding advance in the distribution of purchasing power. Again, if we turn to consider Hitler's achievements it must be acknowledged that he has harnessed the powers of science to make the State into a war machine much more effectively than the democracies have been able to use them for the purpose of advancing the welfare of their individual citizens. Moreover, as already stated, the comparative failure of the democracies in this respect has increased Hitler's opportunity. To say this does not mean that, if the democracies had been more successful in creating a better world, that alone would have been enough to balance Hitler's aggressive policy of Power and War. Clearly that would be untrue, but it surely is true to say that, if more success had been achieved in constructive policies, not only would there have been more hope of getting the democracies to pre-arm themselves for defence of what had been achieved, but they would also have had greater resources for doing so.[1]

To see in all this nothing more than the chance result of mechanical inventions and scientific discoveries is too narrow a view.[2] On the other hand, to take it as illus-

[1] By efficient organisation it might have been possible to provide a good measure of ' butter ' and yet to leave available enough resources to make ' guns ' on a scale adequate to balance the Totalitarian States' effort. But no state could produce adequate supplies of both ' guns ' and ' butter ' simultaneously with maintaining 10 per cent or more of its able-bodied male population in idleness and unemployment.

[2] It is such a view which leads to ideas of Utopias like Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, or, in a less extreme form, Mr. Gandhi's spinning-wheel. But these provide no acceptable guide to practical policies or human progress, since it must surely be man's duty to find means for using scientific power to good effect rather than to be satisfied with guarding against its possible misuse by breaking up machines or artificially restricting knowledge of their use. Moreover, however much India were to concentrate on the spinning-wheel, that would not stop Hitler making tanks and aeroplanes to be used to destroy her true life. I do not, of

trating the need for increasing the influence of moral forces in human affairs is to read a lesson which, though profoundly true, is too general to give close guidance. Both these lessons are important, but in relation to practical policies the most significant aspect of the results that have been described is that they constitute a serious challenge to independent nationalism, to democracy, and to an economic system based on individualistic enterprise. All these represent principles which by common opinion were established by the last war. The Peace Treaties were based on an extreme recognition of nationalism, and Europe was broken up accordingly : the war was fought to " make the world safe for democracy " : when it was over, the system of individualistic enterprise in the economic field was, by tacit consent, allowed to resume full sway. But now it seems clear that nationalism in the sense of isolationism cannot survive : now it is questionable whether the slow-moving and vacillating system of democratic government can keep its place in the world vis-à-vis ruthless Totalitarian Power States : now one must ask whether an individualistic system of business which has failed to give security of employment or to make full use of the world's increased powers of production will be tolerated by the masses of mankind. On all these counts there is a challenge to the bare principle of freedom and its corollaries of *laissez-faire* and individualism, whether practised by nations or individuals. The challenge is real and will continue whatever the result of

course, fail to appreciate that Mr. Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence gives an answer to this and makes his own doctrine consistent and coherent. But one must wonder whether Mr. Gandhi, if he has studied Hitler's methods of mass murder as practised in Poland, etc., can still believe his doctrine to be consistent with practical survival. Once in the late summer of 1939 when I was talking to James Maxton in the smoking-room of the House of Commons, just after he had made a ' non-violence ' pacifist speech, Mr. Winston Churchill came up and said, "Jimmy, whenever I hear you speak, I think of Belloc's lines :

> ' Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight,
> But ruddy Bill, who killed him, thought it right '."

That, if crude, seems to me to express an unanswerable reality.

the present war. I write in supreme confidence that, whatever may happen, there can be no permanent victory for the Totalitarian systems ; that they contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction, because they are founded on evil principles and because there can be no permanence in a system which replaces the rule of law by the rule of individual men. That faith I hold independently of my equally strong faith that the British Commonwealth together with other freedom-loving states will rise to the need of the emergency, and will in the end prevail in the present conflict of armed force. But the challenge will remain. There could be no more fatal mistake than to say " We will defeat Germany, and all the Totalitarian powers will crack, and then we shall be able to muddle along in the old way as we did in the years after 1918 ". The threat may come again at any time from the same or another quarter. Moreover, the economic and social problems demand solution independently of the struggle with Totalitarian powers. Salvation can only be found in building up a better system which will gradually win the allegiance of all mankind, and which, until then, is strong enough to defend itself. It is because we failed to achieve that after 1918 that the present struggle has come upon us. The question is, how is the challenge to be met without sacrificing the very essence of the principles for which we are fighting — freedom for each individual and each nation to develop its own destiny — destruction of the tyranny of man over man or nation over nation. There can be only one answer ; freedom, whether for the individual or for the nation, must be used not with a narrow vision of selfish benefit, but in co-operation with other nations or individuals for a common purpose, in shaping which the moral forces must prevail. The bare principle of freedom without an adequate conception as to its use is not enough ; without contributive co-operation no individual benefit can be secure.

3

To preach this doctrine is to bring one on to common ground with many leaders of Indian thought. They appreciate that India cannot live to herself or work out her own future untroubled from the outside world. No one has realised this more clearly than the Mahatma, who has condemned roundly the ambition " to live like a frog in a well ". Jawaharlal Nehru, too, in his recently published book, *The Unity of India*, has written :

> The day of small countries is past. It is also patent that the day of even big countries standing by themselves is past. Huge countries like the Soviet Union or the United States of America may be capable of standing by themselves, but even they are likely to join themselves with other countries or groups. The only solution is a world federation of free countries. In Europe people talk of a European Federation or Union, sometimes they include the U.S.A. and the British Dominions in their group. They leave out always China and India, imagining that these two great countries can be ignored. There can be no world-arrangement which is based on ignoring India or China. If there are to be federations, India will not fit into a European federation where it can only be a hanger-on of semi-colonial status.

The main idea thus expressed fits in exactly with the line of thought which I have been developing in the present chapter, and it will find a wide response in England to-day. We shall most of us disagree, incidentally, with the charge that great countries like China and India are forgotten in our thoughts of co-operation between free countries, or that we assume that if India were to join a Western federation she could be given the rôle of a mere " hanger-on of semi-colonial status ". But we will not quarrel with the warning. What does require examination, however, is how widely and in what form the union between groups of countries can be effected. Jawaharlal Nehru talks of a " world federation of free countries ". Can the tie extend to ' federation ', and how many countries could that include ?

Much has been written on this subject recently. In this chapter no more can be attempted than to state certain considerations which may help to clear thinking on India's policy. Those who support the idea of a world federation regard it as affording the only sure foundation for peace, because in their view peace can never be secure in a world of separate sovereign states. The line of argument is perfectly logical, but it is of little practical help, since if all nations had reached a point where each was ready to merge its identity in a world state and surrender its full sovereignty, that would indicate a state of feeling sufficient in itself to have eliminated the danger of war.

We may keep the idea of a world federation before us as an ultimate ideal, but it will be more valuable to be ready with less ambitious first steps lest, as happened with the League of Nations, we fail to achieve anything by attempting too much. A more realistic vision is that which seems to have been in Jawaharlal Nehru's mind, namely, that those states which have no aggressive ambitions and which desire peace and freedom should combine together and endeavour so to organise themselves as to neutralise the threat from potential aggressors, possibly by finding means to give those too a "vested interest in peace", but more surely by making themselves so strong in defence that neither by threatening nor by making war would their adversaries be able to prevail.

Is so wide a grouping likely to be possible, or may this also prove to be too difficult a plan for complete realisation at first? To answer that question it is necessary to apprehend clearly both the purposes of such a combination and the measures required to make it effective. Two main practical objectives have to be envisaged — the welfare of individuals and peace among nations. Two branches of co-operation are involved — in economic policy and in defence measures. Economic co-operation itself has a double significance — first, because to lessen the economic significance of political boundaries will reduce one of the

main potential causes of war; secondly, as a measure for the promotion of material welfare.

What do the two branches of co-operation involve? Economic co-operation is required for the promotion of material welfare because there is in fact no nation which is so placed that it can obtain its optimum development on a basis of complete self-sufficiency. The differentials of human skill in industry may perhaps be evened out, but differences in climate, soil, and mineral resources create differential advantages in primary production between one country and another which no skill in devising substitute products can overcome, and this means that without an exchange of goods in international trade each nation would be compelled either to go without certain goods or to provide them for itself at an unduly high cost. This of course is elementary. But as against this there has been among all nations a growing desire for achieving a measure of security in developing their own policies and a growing fear of placing their fate in the hands of others by becoming economically dependent on them. Security, in fact, is desired not only in the event of war, but also against economic fluctuations and unemployment. The latter kind of security in any country which is not insulated from the world may be powerfully affected by what other countries do, and for a group of nations which are economically interdependent there can be no real security unless the policies of each fit in together. That means that there must be close political co-operation and, without arguing the matter out more fully, it may be said that experience before the war had made it increasingly clear that for effective economic co-operation it would be necessary to have a group of nations not only in such sympathy together that the idea of war between them was unthinkable, but with political ties close enough to ensure continuity of harmonious policies of all kinds. In fact, as has already been stated in Chapter Two, economic barriers can only be lowered *pari passu* with political co-operation, and it is only within a group based

on surely founded co-operation over the whole field of political life that far-reaching economic concessions can be expected or can themselves have any sure foundation.

If one turns to consider co-operation for defence, it is clear that this also, if it is to be effective, must be based on extremely close and harmonious political co-operation. If each country is to bear its fair share of a common burden, all must be agreed as to the extent of burden to be undertaken. There must be agreement, too, in the field of foreign policy covering all action, economic or otherwise, which might provoke quarrels with countries outside the group. And that must involve not only a common policy in normal relations but also in special measures, short of war, which might have to be taken against potential peace-breakers. The imposition of economic sanctions is an example of such measures which covers both the economic and defence field. How vitally important that might be as an instrument of policy is clear from the fact that if the Allies of the last war had in their trading with Germany combined to restrict supplies of war materials, that would have made it physically impossible for Germany to rebuild her war strength. (Indeed one of the phenomena which will most amaze the historian of future years is the fact that, even up to the last months before the present war, the British Commonwealth, France, and the United States were sending to Germany — sometimes on credit — enormous quantities of the very materials which she needed for her war preparations — materials which at the time she could not have procured elsewhere.)

There will be needed, too, the closest co-operation in defence plans and in the maintenance of fighting forces. The essential feature of the modern era of mechanical warfare which distinguishes it entirely from past eras is the overwhelming advantage of material equipment. No spirit of devotion to the State, no personal bravery or natural fighting quality, no genius for improvisation, will suffice to meet an enemy who has a start of long years of

preparation in building up vast stocks of war material and a vast manufacturing capacity for its further production. One of the significant lessons to be learned from the advance in mechanical inventions is the advantage which they give to administrative efficiency, especially in making plans in advance, as compared with spiritual and moral qualities. Those who wish to give free play to the latter must develop a corresponding measure of efficiency, and that means, if a group of nations is to achieve its purpose, that each member must have an efficient system of government which is not distracted from its defence plans, even in times of peace, by other policies, and that all must be bound by such close ties that they can work with a unified purpose.

Obviously no group of nations can do that unless their governments have harmonious policies. For example, if in one country there is a government which wishes to concentrate on social policies and cut down armaments, while in the other countries of the group the necessity for expenditure on armaments is regarded as having urgent priority, that is likely to lead to dissensions gravely affecting the power of the group.

To sum up, whether we look at co-operation in economic policy or in defence, we are brought to the conclusion that it cannot be effective without very close political union. It is such considerations which must be borne in mind when we are considering ideas of a federation or even of a co-operating group of nations. These ideas are often vaguely conceived, and it seems doubtful whether all those who see their attractions visualise fully the closeness of political harmony which is necessary or the sacrifice of independence which individual nations would have to accept if the group is to achieve the objects which are envisaged.

An urgent common danger clearly apprehended can, of course, be a unifying influence so powerful as to override all normal difficulties and hesitations. Before the present war is over, measures which have in the past

seemed impossible may perhaps be adopted with common consent as the only means of salvation. Jawaharlal Nehru in the book already quoted reminds his readers that at the supreme crisis of last summer the British Government proposed to France a complete unification of the two countries in one state. It is at least conceivable that in the stress of war some step of this kind might be taken between the British Commonwealth and the United States. If that should happen, India's relations both with the British Commonwealth and the rest of the world would appear in a new light, and most of the controversy which has recently raged in the Indian political field would become out of date and meaningless. Even if so extreme a development may be regarded as improbable, it is a fairly certain forecast that, as this war develops, and as the threat to India comes nearer, there will be a great change in her public opinion and in the way in which her relations with the British Commonwealth and the world in general are regarded. Anything written now about these relations must therefore be of doubtful value, and one must enter the caveat that the printing press cannot keep pace with events. Subject to this reservation, it may be useful to pursue the investigation of India's position a step further, not so much with the idea of forecasting what will happen as of helping clear thinking on the whole of her problems.

4

Looking back on the conditions and tendencies which have prevailed hitherto, and taking account of all that has just been said about the closeness of political ties which will be necessary if co-operation between groups of nations is to be effective, it is not an unreasonable forecast that the world might as a first step towards a wider unity become organised into a small number of groups of nations, supplemented by *ententes* between certain of these groups. A reduction in the number of nations involved in each group would make co-operation easier, but

a group would require to comprise economic resources of a range wide enough to allow for complementary trade between its members and to give it as a whole a sufficiently broad foundation. To go on from this general idea to consider how the groups might be composed and what are likely to be their characters and policies, is to enter upon a field of entirely uncertain speculation. Nevertheless, as it has been part of the Congress party's demand to claim that India should have the right to sever her connection with the British Commonwealth and decide her future alignment among the nations, it may help towards clearer thinking on the whole position if, on the assumption, which is apparently accepted, that she will not be able to stand entirely alone, some attempt is made to visualise what it would mean for her to associate herself with one or other of the various possible groups. There might, for example, be five main groups — Central European, Slavonic, Far Eastern, American, and lastly a group centred round the British Commonwealth. How would India fare with any of these?

Assuming some continuity of existing characteristics, it is surely inconceivable that India should wish to unite herself with either a Central European or a Slavonic group. Germany, Italy, and Russia have all been built on the creed that the individual is to be sacrificed to the State, and that individual freedom counts for nothing. "To claim to reconcile the State and Liberty is nonsense", said Lenin. "Nothing counts outside the State. . . . The State is the Law," said Mussolini. "The State *dominates the nation because the State alone represents* the nation", said Hitler. These were all statements made in the days of peace. The doctrines of the Central European powers have been revealed with more glaring clearness as the war has progressed. Germany claims to offer security to her satellites by buying up their crops for years to come; but it is the security of serfdom — a serfdom which will restrict them to primitive activities directed for the benefit of German economy. According to the

German doctrine "a lower race needs less food, less clothes, and less culture than a higher race",[1] and "The German people, as the pivot and leaders of Europe's new era, must avoid the temptation to devote their energies to the good of others".[2]

But it is hardly necessary to labour the point that India could find no home in a Central European bloc dominated by the German spirit. All parties and classes have already expressed their detestation of this spirit, and the general response to the war has shown that Indians are ready to risk their lives in fighting against it. What then of Russia? Despite all the recent disillusionment about her, despite the purges, the understanding with Germany, the Finnish War, and the subtle transformation of her economic and social system, Russia still stands for certain easily understood ideals, questionable in their value but attractive to a very large number of people in all countries. While she has nothing to do with democracy, she stands nevertheless for equality in the sense that her system, while tolerating small differences in income, prevents absolutely the accumulation of any very large fortunes. Russia still makes an appeal as a country in which, though freedom is unknown, the energies of the people are systematically organised for the promotion of the general welfare, and in which by a kind of rough justice all citizens share and share alike in the general dividend. To all who feel themselves oppressed or exploited this is an attractive picture. But behind this picture lie realities of a different kind — the shortcomings in the translation of principles into practice, the barbarity of the State machine, the cruelty which has gone to the production of results, the hardships suffered in spite of the grandiose industrial structure which has been built up, and all the other consequences involved in the sacrifice of the individual to the State. These features, together with the ruthless suppression of all forms of religion and the lack of any

[1] These words are quoted from a speech of Dr. Ley.

[2] See *Das Reich* of October 1940.

basis for economic reciprocity with India, combine to make it hard to believe that India could ever contemplate merging herself within a Russian bloc.

What a bloc of Far Eastern powers might stand for is much harder to say. At present China and Japan are in a conflict the final result of which may be the supremacy of the one or the other, or possibly their reconciliation in a more or less amicable association. In any of these alternative events what would happen? To the circles in India interested in such matters, Chinese culture may appear to signify an Oriental way of life, a repudiation of the West with its clear and uncompromising ideas, and a society based neither on law nor on force but on personal understanding and on a pervading system of morality. Japanese society might at one time have been conceived in much the same terms; but Japan has been moving increasingly towards Totalitarian ideals and methods, and it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that if Japan were to overcome China these ideals and methods would obtain much stronger hold. In that case for India to become a member of such a group would mean that she too would pass under the domination of Japan, or at best have a share in a partnership in which she herself would certainly not be the dominant partner. If on the other hand China were to prevail, what would that mean? What strength would she have as a partner for India? China will still need to 'find herself' when the unifying influence of resistance to Japan is removed. She must be for long in a state of transition and instability. It has to be remembered, too, that the economic qualities and needs of India and China are by no means complementary to each other. Taking all these considerations into account, is it possible to imagine that these two vast populations could weld themselves together into a unit strong enough to stand alone in the sort of world which may emerge from the present war? Is it not in fact reasonable to conclude that for India to become a member of a Far Eastern group would

mean either that she would come under the domination of Japan, or that she would be merged in a bloc lacking the cohesion and strength necessary for effective action and survival?

5

Leaving aside the very improbable alternative that India should associate herself with an American group, one may turn lastly to consider her position in the British Commonwealth. Whatever one may think of the practical possibility of India detaching herself from the Commonwealth in any conditions which can at present be foreseen, this book would be incomplete without an attempt to face the issues squarely. What does Indian membership of the Commonwealth mean? Is such membership advantageous for India compared with any other possible arrangement? Indians' appreciation of the position is inevitably affected by familiarity. The ideals of the Commonwealth lack the appeal of freshness and the stimulus of novelty. Moreover, just as familiarity with a person often results in forming a fixed and permanent view of his character and in overlooking changes of which a stranger would at once be aware, so India still thinks of the Empire in terms of two or three decades ago, and has failed to appreciate fully the transformation which has taken place.

This is one cause of error, but a more serious cause lies in the tendency among certain Indians to allow general ideas and preoccupations to replace close observation. The British Commonwealth is represented as an Imperialist organisation and included in a general condemnation of Imperialism. Imperialism too is taken to connote all the worst features that empires in the past displayed or that Hitler, with his doctrine of a Herrenvolk entitled to exercise dominion over inferior races, is now seeking to impose on the world. There is not space here to attempt an analysis of the various ways in which the Imperial idea has been or can be interpreted.

What I write is based on the belief that the British Commonwealth, in the form which it is now assuming, embodies an idea which is new in history. In this form it represents a free association of states diverse in social organisation and even in political structure, and with histories radically different, which nevertheless find themselves in broad agreement as to the value of certain features of civilised life — liberty, liberalism, individualism, and the human outlook, and are bound together in a union which is symbolised by allegiance to a common sovereign. Without any desire to interfere with one another's internal affairs, they have yet accepted the fact that in the modern world no nation can stand alone and that the crying need of the times is for world order. Therefore they band themselves together, creating an oasis of order in a world of chaos, anxious to live on good terms with all other countries, but believing that they can make their best contribution if they act together with a certain cohesion. That is the way in which the equal partners in the Commonwealth can truly view it : — a way, too, in which it is to be hoped that India would view it when, under a new constitution, she develops into full Dominion Status. It is on that basis that all that follows is written.

That it is to the true advantage of India that she should work out her destiny as a member of the British Commonwealth may be based on five main reasons. The first reason is connected with what has been the main thesis of this chapter. This is, that in order to obtain effective cohesion between groups of countries there must be close political co-operation, which may involve a substantial sacrifice of complete independence by each member of the group. The essential question is, how far must this sacrifice go ? It would be a just claim to make on behalf of the British Commonwealth that its members have devised a system which provides for sufficient community of action on great issues consistently with the minimum of interference with the liberty of each in domestic policies.

In this respect, indeed, the British Commonwealth is unique in history. Therefore the first point to be made in stating the advantages of the British Commonwealth as a group for India's membership is that it has provided for its members the maximum of individual liberty, and that in no other group could India find such freedom to develop according to her own traditions and aspirations. That, in view of the new threats which have come upon the world by the development of German policies, it will be necessary in future to devise some closer and more precise arrangements for common action is a probability which must be envisaged, one aspect of which has been already referred to in Chapter Three. Many things which sufficed in a stable and peaceful world may not be adequate for a world which Hitler has forced to go back five hundred years, and in which he has given — at least for a time — to the bare need for self-preservation an urgency which overrides everything else. But it is safe to say that, even in these altered conditions, the British system is likely to allow a greater latitude than any other.

The second reason is really ancillary to the first. The fact that the unity of the British Commonwealth is possible without more precise and restrictive provisions for securing it is largely based on community of outlook and long tradition. Some Indian Nationalists would doubtless say that India does not share this tradition and outlook in the same way as the Dominions. That may be true, but, even so, surely realistic reflection will show that India would find a far greater community in these matters with the British nations than with any other possible group. One does not want to overstress the fact that India in a sense belongs to the English-speaking world in so far as English is the language of common political intercourse throughout the country — though that is a fact which has a definite importance. What is more significant is that in modern India political, and to a great extent social, thinking is mainly of English origin.

The third reason lies in the economic conditions.

India's capacities and needs fit in much more closely with those of the British Commonwealth than they could do with any other group. That is demonstrated by the trade figures. Before the beginning of the present war India found markets for 54 per cent of her exports in countries of the British Commonwealth (34 per cent in the United Kingdom), while she derived 58 per cent of her imports from them (30 per cent from the United Kingdom). This was not a position artificially fostered to favour British manufacturers, but one founded on natural conditions and reciprocal benefit.[1] It can, of course, only rest securely on that basis, and it must be fully recognised on the British side that India could not be retained as a willing member of the Commonwealth if she were to be relegated to the rôle described by Jawaharlal Nehru as that of a mere " hanger-on of semi-colonial status ". That she can find in the United Kingdom or other British countries an outlet for those primary products which she is specially fitted to produce is not only to her own advantage, but a contribution to the general economic well-being of the world ; and it is, of course, clear that in order to maintain this position she must take some imports in return. But there can be no question now of India not developing a full range of activities with a balanced economy of industrial and agricultural production. That, if for no other reason, is necessary if India is to play her proper part as a member of a group of countries co-operating for purposes of

[1] It is interesting to compare the position in 1938–9 with that prevailing before the last war. The average for the five years to 1914 shows the British countries supplying 70 per cent of India's imports (United Kingdom 63 per cent) and taking 41 per cent of India's exports (United Kingdom 25 per cent). The trade balance within the Commonwealth has, therefore, moved steadily in India's favour. It is to be noted, however, that in these earlier figures Burma was included in India, whereas now India's trade with Burma is shown as part of her foreign trade. In 1938–9 Burma supplied 16 per cent of India's exports and took about 6½ per cent of her exports. Therefore, omitting Burma, the British countries in 1938–9 took about 47½ per cent of India's exports and supplied 42 per cent of her imports. Japan in the same year supplied 10 per cent of India's imports and took 8·8 per cent of her exports.

defence. Her strategic position fits her especially well to be one of the great arsenals of the British group — and that would involve a fully developed industrial structure.

This leads one on to the fourth main reason for India to belong to the British group — her strategical position. She occupies in fact a key position along the lines of British communication between Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. This is a reason which, of course, operates in both directions. On the one hand India's position is one of vital importance in the interests of the Commonwealth, on the other it means for India that she comes within the routes over which the British navy must range, and therefore is included in the Commonwealth plan of naval defence. It is quite clear, in fact, that India must be under the protection either of the British navy or of the Japanese.

The fifth and last reason which I shall mention rests on broader grounds. If one looks forward to a world federation as the ultimate ideal, it must be of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated that no unbridgeable gulf should be allowed to grow up between the Oriental and Western civilisations. It may well be put forward, therefore, as one of the strongest reasons for including India within the British Commonwealth that by this means a bridge will be maintained between the two great groups of civilisations. This idea is significant in many ways, and it will surely not appeal to India the less if the association is advocated on the ground that it would benefit the world as a whole. I have said in the first chapter that I believe that in this association between the British and Indian nations something very fine has been built up, which, if it can be developed further on a basis of complete equality and equal self-respect, will be an example to the world and a help in the solution of its problems. That there should be a continuance of this relation, and an understanding between the two peoples, that the excellences of the two should be blended together counteracting the shortcomings of each, may well be put

forward as affording the strongest reason of all for maintaining their close comradeship in the next critical stage of the world's history.

6

The foregoing paragraphs represent no more than a superficial treatment of important and difficult issues. I do not seek to pronounce a final judgment on any of them.

Nor indeed can any man claim to be qualified to do so, since no one knows in what conditions the next steps will have to be taken. All these thoughts lie in the realm of pure speculation. One thing, however, is clear — that there is to-day a broad division in the world between the countries which stand for peace, freedom, and the welfare of their individual citizens, as contrasted with those which think in terms of power for the State, tyrannical government, racial supremacy and aggressive war as legitimate and even intrinsically desirable means to their ends. That distinction is a present reality, and if I might give rein to my own speculations I would say that I visualise countries of the former class grouping themselves into " bastions of liberty " in the world. The two most powerful bastions among Western civilisations must be the British Commonwealth and the United States. The two main bastions in the East should be India and China. The closer the ties between these four great bastions, the stronger will be the defensive system. How these ties will ultimately develop cannot now be foretold. For the next stages, however, the facts of the situation are such that India must develop her strength as part of the British group. In all the present uncertainty it is folly to look beyond the next stages, for example, by making India's ultimate right to independence a condition of immediate arrangements. That is a right which India at present, or in the stages that can be definitely foreseen, could not exercise. But it is equally a demand which no British Government could resist as soon as India has developed for herself a

strength and unity sufficient for her to stand independently. To help India to attain that unity and strength is a duty which, in my belief, the British people as a whole recognise and are anxious to fulfil. It is in no way inconsistent with the recognition of this duty to maintain the faith and hope that, when India is strong enough to exercise an independent choice, she will choose to remain a member of the British Commonwealth, and that it will be in her interest to do so.

But if India is to see all the advantages which I have sketched in membership of the Commonwealth it must be equal membership.

To what that means I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND INDIA

In the last chapter the conclusion was reached that, in a world organised into groups of nations, India's right place is in the group of the British Commonwealth. One of the main themes of the argument leading up to this conclusion was that, if a group of nations is to be effective for the purposes which will probably be necessary in the next stage of world development, a very close unity of policy in all fields will be required among its members ; that to achieve this will involve a voluntary surrender of independence of action by these members ; but that in the British Commonwealth there has been built up a group pervaded by a spirit which offers the hope of effective joint action with the minimum of sacrifice by each member of its own freedom. This spirit is hard to define. It is composed of several elements. There is the binding tie of a 'common way of life' which covers many things, but which is based essentially on respect for the rights and freedom of the individual citizen, tolerance, the rule of law, and the acceptance of the welfare of the people rather than the greatness of the State as the primary concern of government. Another element is the allegiance to a common Sovereign, which has a sentimental as well as a constitutional significance. And lastly, there is for many the tie of a common home of origin. Combining all these things, the full meaning of the Commonwealth spirit should be that its members feel that they belong to it, and that it belongs to them. So, when we turn to consider India, an important question is — Can India, as a free and equal partner, be made to share these feelings with the other dominions ? In previous chapters India's tasks have

been reviewed. Here we turn to a task for the British. It is from the British side that a constructive contribution must be made.

That India should have exactly the same feelings as any other member is not necessary — for even among the existing dominions there are differences, and the strength of the appeal made by each element in the mixed spirit of the Commonwealth varies. Thus in Australia and New Zealand the tendency to regard Britain as 'home' is probably a more universal and therefore stronger characteristic than in Canada with its mixed population. In Canada again it would be stronger than in South Africa. Mere race is clearly not the only thing. One has only to think of General Smuts and his followers in South Africa or of the French Canadians who, though remaining most conservatively French, are as loyal citizens of the Empire as can be found. Nor is long residence necessary. I was much impressed, for example, recently by hearing a Canadian minister who represented a district in Saskatchewan describe the composition and feelings of his constituents. He had twelve townships to represent — each six miles square. He went through the list of them as he would travel through them. The population of the first two were Austrian Germans ; the next one Ukrainian Poles ; the next North American Indians, then Russian Jews — Austrian Germans and Russian Jews — Scots and English — Roumanians — Hungarians — French Canadians, and the last two, Austrian Germans. A varied population indeed, representing almost every nation on both sides in this war. But in one thing there was no variation, in one idea they were united — that this democracy of ours was worth fighting for, and that they were with us in this war. The first member of the Saskatchewan Parliament to join up was a German born in Russia who did not know a word of English until he was ten. The point of view of these people was interesting. They said, "You are only British subjects by chance — because you happened to be born British. But we are British subjects

by our own choice. We chose that because yours is the only kind of state in which men can have lives worth living."

Here is evidence of feelings which, even though their strengthening and full revelation may have been brought about by the special cause of Hitler's threat, nevertheless can be counted on to flow deeply and permanently. Can it be said that feelings such as this exist in India? There are many signs that they do, at least in a form which produces similar results, even if based on different motives. In many respects the Indian response to the war is impressive, particularly in the flow of recruits to the colours. Not long ago Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Premier of the Punjab, said in a public speech, "Tell the British people that if there is any trouble in the Middle East I will raise them a million men without any pressure from the Government or any other Englishman — a million volunteers".

But, as always in speaking of India, one must remember the great variety of human characteristics and natural conditions that it comprises. Those who know the Indian army — which is the central factor in the life of many districts of the Punjab and elsewhere — can claim with assurance that there exists between certain sections of the Indian people and the British a sense of common service, common interests, ideals and loyalties. In other realms, too, that can be found. Of the Princes it may be said that they belong to the British 'family', and feel personal loyalty to the British Sovereign as warm as that of any Britisher. Or, in quite trivial matters such as sport one can find a spirit of comradeship in common activities which, in spite of the triviality, is significant as illustrating how racial differences can be forgotten. But making full allowances for all these things, there remains 'political India' and all that new life which has actually grown up under the influence of the British connection and British education. Here there is evidence of very different feelings, and it would be mere blindness to ignore their

significance. One can hardly imagine Indian Nationalist politicians to-day expressing the sentiments quoted above from Saskatchewan. Or, to test the Indian position by another illuminating comparison, it seems true to say that whereas in ancient days to be a Roman citizen was the ambition and pride of men in all countries (whether in Europe or Asia) where Roman influence was felt, to-day to cease to be citizens of the British Commonwealth is the declared aim of many Indian Nationalists. This is a challenging statement which doubtless is subject to many questions and qualifications. Aspirations are often voiced in political speeches the actual realisation of which might shock the speakers. But it is significant that it is these aspirations which win applause, and even if the political-minded intelligentsia of India only represent a small fraction of her people, it must be remembered that the introduction of a democratic constitution, with all the paraphernalia of election campaigns and the ballot-box, is bringing the thoughts of such people into the minds of the masses of the peasantry and industrial workers. Some Indians would say, " Give us constitutional freedom including the *right* to independence, and all this will change ". In a sense it may, but the conclusion will be widely shared by those who know India to-day that among all the educated classes the main feeling is one far removed from any sense of common citizenship or from the ' Commonwealth spirit ' which has been described in the British Dominions.

The comparison with the Roman Empire is perhaps worth following somewhat further. A passage from a recent review [1] by G. M. Young of two books on Rome has seemed to me to put some thoughts on it in an illuminating way. Reflecting on one of the recent debates on India in Parliament, he finds himself tempted to wish that we could call up one of the great statesmen of the Republic, or one of the great administrators of the Empire, Camillus or Hadrian, and ask him what he thinks about it all.

[1] *Sunday Times*, 5th November 1939.

It is a curious reflection, he proceeds, but I believe a true one, that it would be much easier to explain the problems of India to Trajan than to Walpole. When we had finished our exposition, I think he would have said : " I quite understand that India is the *loci patria* of Nerus Harrovianus. But I don't quite see what his *patria juris* is. Possibly you couldn't help yourselves, starting as you had to with the idea of a national state. But it certainly looks to me as if you had rather neglected the notion of *communis patria*, which is a blend of the other two. Heaven knows, we made mistakes enough by the way, but in the end we did establish the principle of dual citizenship. I mean the common allegiance of all to the State, the *res publica*, and their private allegiance to the city or canton of their birth, *colonia* or *municipium* or *civitas foederata*."

" Only at the price," I said, " of a common subjection of all to Caesar."

" Well, really," he replied, " subjection was all that the Roman riff-raff had become fit for ; and the provinces were infinitely happier under a Caesar than under a pack of exploiting Italian financiers. . . . But you are quite right. It was a great pity the Republic had to go, because in its early days it must have been a very grand thing. . . . But remember this. You might have run the West on those lines as a *civitas civitatum*. You could never have run the East. There you must have a person in charge, a king whom they can worship, and, as long as he keeps the peace and sees they are not fleeced, worship him they will. I don't like it ; no Westerner can, unless his brain is turned like Domitian's. But it is the only way : we must keep the East and West together or the barbarians will be in, and our Mediterranean civilisation will go down. And what we have done is this : all over the world, from Gloucester to Baalbek, people want to keep it standing : they are ready to pay for it, and even to fight for it. They are beginning to feel that it is the *communis patria* of them all, because it assures to them all the simple things that ordinary people need : a safe existence, a chance of making money and keeping it ; giving their family a good start in the world ; not being bothered ; an occasional treat. And if they call it Rome, I think they are right, because if we had not done it I don't think anyone else could."

" You said just now," I remarked, " that people want to keep it standing. Aren't you sometimes afraid, Caesar, that

what they really want is somebody else to keep it standing for them? That is why we prefer the other way, getting as many people as possible interested in running things, and improving them. And this gives us our real *patria*, which is not exactly a place, and not exactly a system of law, but a habit, which has become an aptitude, and a fondness for doing things in the same way, and looking at them in the same light."

"A *patria morum* in fact," he said. "Just so," I replied, and our trouble is that while we do share such a *patria* with the Canadians and the New Zealanders we have not enlarged it to include the Indians."

"Not yet you mean," he said.

This passage starts many lines of thought. In the first place, whatever the achievements of the Roman Empire, in the end it failed and fell — as have all other empires in history. We may read from this the lesson that there is a fatal flaw in all systems which rest on personal rule or on the principle that one nation has the right to exercise domination over others. And we may go on from that to the belief that the British Commonwealth has discovered a surer foundation — a self-vitalising principle, in that it is a free union rooted on the will of the peoples in its member countries, each managing their own affairs. But, if this is the essential principle on which the hope of permanence is founded, that only serves to emphasise all the more strongly the necessity for finding a satisfactory answer to the question put at the outset of this chapter — how to establish a tie between India and the Commonwealth based on spontaneous feelings.

A second reflection may be that the glamour of citizenship in the Roman Empire rested largely on the fact that in its time it was the only civilised state within the knowledge of those who came in contact with it. They were surrounded by 'barbarians'. The Empire embodied and preserved civilisation. If it fell apart, it was literally true to say "the barbarian will be in, and our Mediterranean civilisation will go down". But in the modern world as it has been until this war, there have been many 'civilised' nations or empires, and the whole world has been known

to all. India, for example, has been able to dally with the idea of adhering to any of these, or even of standing alone. But perhaps to-day we are moving into new conditions which will bring back some sort of parallel to the contrast between two broad divisions of the world — the civilised life of the Roman Empire on the one side, and on the other, the outer darkness of the ' barbarians '. Something of this sort is no improbable speculation, if what we have now to envisage is a long struggle between the freedom-loving nations and the Totalitarian tyrannies — a struggle which may, as a struggle of principles, continue long after the end of the present war. In such circumstances the result may well be, as has been suggested in the last chapter, that the free nations will, for the sake of the survival of their way of life, find themselves impelled to join in a close union, not merely for the present war, but for a long period thereafter. That means looking forward to conditions different from any that we have known, conditions in which a common ideology, reinforced by the urgent need of self-preservation, could form a fully sufficient binding tie — conditions too in which the British Commonwealth, while strengthened in its own union, could become merged in a wider group.

To contemplate such possibilities is, as has already been said, to enter the realm of pure speculation. But in present circumstances speculation as to the future may take us nearer to the truth than mere unimaginative assumptions that conditions will continue as in the past. One speculation which has been claimed in the last chapter to be reasonably sure, is that conditions will in fact be so different that India will see her relations with the world and with the British Commonwealth in a new light. How that new light will make things appear will of course depend on how the war goes and on the conditions which prevail when it is over, but I write in the strong belief that they will be such as to make the value of co-operation between our two nations more vividly appreciated.

That belief, however, can be no excuse for failing to appreciate such lessons as can be learned from the past — and there are many to be learned both on mistakes to be avoided and on constructive steps that might be taken. Looking back on the comparison made with the Roman Empire, it is undoubtedly a true charge that we have failed to build up any warmly felt idea of a *communis patria* — a common citizenship. It is not difficult to find causes which have contributed to this failure. Writing a century ago, Sir John Malcolm, one of the ablest of the earlier administrators, said, " Our administration, though just, is cold and rigid. If it creates no alarm it inspires little, if any, affection. The people is protected, but not animated or attached. . . . The British Government rejects everything personal. There is neither a ruler to dread nor a people to please." That indicates one factor which, although there have been many notable exceptions in the positions achieved by individual British administrators, has operated fairly constantly. Beyond this it must be said that little has been done to bring vividly before Indian minds the best that is in the British character or the spirit which really animates the British people. The Britain that Indians have seen has been represented partly, it is true, by some outstanding men as viceroys, civil servants, and soldiers, but also very often by officials and business men who have preserved an insular and somewhat narrow outlook. In the old days of the sailing ship and a voyage round the Cape there was much closer fraternisation, as can be seen in books like Hickey's *Memoirs*. But in more recent days, in spite of many excellent qualities, the middle class mentality of many officials and business men has tended not only to estrange educated Indians but also to give them an untrue view of the trend in British opinion. It is hard to express this idea without being unfair to individuals, but perhaps one aspect of the truth may be indicated by saying that if the contacts between Indians and British had been confined to those with some of the great noblemen who have served as Viceroys at one end

and, at the other, to contacts with humble British folk such as the mill hands who gave such a welcome to Mr. Gandhi in Lancashire, there might have been a better understanding. Let me emphasise that this is not said in any snobbish sense. True excellence in any man, whatever his social grade, is understood and appreciated by Indians. The trouble has come from people whose natural excellences have not been equal to the social status which their position as Britishers in India has — in their own estimation at least — given them. Beyond this it must be said that the British nation at home has for the most part remained singularly indifferent to what has been happening in India, and our really first-class men, apart from those filling appointments in India, do not seem on the whole to have been able to find time to visit the country or take an interest in its affairs. This may seem to many to be an unfair charge, but I might quote one personal experience to illustrate my meaning. When I was Finance Member in India I set up a Banking Commission. The Commission itself was appointed entirely from Indians, but, in order to bring in outside experience and yet avoid any impression that we were endeavouring to impose exclusively British ideas on India, it was arranged that a small Advisory Committee of outside experts from different countries should be invited to come out and work with the Commission. On this body I was able to get the services of an outstanding Dutch banker — a man who was shortly afterwards appointed Governor of the Dutch Central Bank — and also one of the most notable bankers from Berlin. It proved, however, quite impossible to get any leading English banker to spare the time to visit India, and, in the end, the post of the English member had to be filled by a young man of thirty who had barely completed his experience as a learner in a London banking house. It would be possible to multiply illustrations of this kind, and these things go far to account for lack of proper understanding between the two countries. It is a typical British characteristic to care very little about the opinion of others

— to believe in 'minding one's own business' and to expect others to do the same. Such an attitude may have much to commend it, but it is not likely to create close understanding or lead to popularity. At any rate it is certain that, if there is to be a true understanding between the two nations, the British must do more than has been done in the past to make themselves understood.

The urgency of making a great effort to this end can hardly be overstated, and it has been increasing with the development of modern methods for spreading information. The influence of the cinema is particularly important. That is to-day a chief link between Britain and India. To great sections indeed of the Indian masses it is the only method by which the life, character, and ideas of British and other Western races are presented to them. India is judging us by this presentation; it fancies that it has at last seen through us, whereas in fact it knows little of contemporary British social development and thought. The surprising arrogance of some of the younger Indians to-day is the product of ignorance about ourselves for which we are chiefly responsible.

But of course it is not only a question of ignorance and there are certain definite causes of friction and misunderstanding. One might refer to many. Some arise in the social sphere, such as the non-admission of Indians to certain British clubs in India. These things are widely deplored on the British side, and recently some Governors and Viceroys, particularly Lord Willingdon, have done much to bring about the breaking down of superficial discriminations of this kind. I certainly am one of those who deplore them, but perhaps while the symptoms are entirely regrettable they may be evidence of an underlying attitude characteristic of British relations with other races which at least deserves careful appraisal and analysis by both Indians and British before it is utterly condemned. There is no space to deal with that fully here, but certain considerations may be suggested. It would

be interesting, for example, to follow out in some detail a comparison between British and French attitudes in this matter. There is a strong contrast between them, the nature of which can perhaps be indicated by saying that the British attitude has always been governed by a respect for local religions, customs, and traditions, which has expressed itself in one way in a reluctance to interfere with these, and in another in a reaction of distaste and suspicion when local people have shown a tendency to ape British customs. The French policy, on the other hand, has been to break down distinctions between races and to weld them into a mixed amalgam, dominated by their own language and ideas. If the British attitude is to be interpreted as implying a sense of superiority and resentment that those whom they regard as inferiors should try to imitate their ways, then obviously there is nothing to commend it, and it must inevitably lead to ill feeling. But, although that interpretation may be true for certain individuals, and although for others the motives may be mixed, I believe that it is a partial and unfair interpretation of the fundamental British attitude. Account should at least be taken of the other side. This question of the relation between races is a very difficult one. I write as one who believes that there are fundamental distinctions which should be recognised and preserved, and that this is possible without any implication of superiority on one side or the other. Therefore I believe that in the long run the British attitude is better for both sides than the French ; that it is better, for example, for an Indian to develop as a true Indian and not as an imitation Englishman ; and that the great problem is to develop a relationship which, while recognising distinctions, maintains a basis of complete equality and allows the two races to develop each according to its own characteristics and excellences and to react on each other to mutual advantage.

To follow up this line of thought is, of course, to take the matter far beyond petty social irritations. And indeed

it seems to me important to see these in their true proportion and not to allow them to warp judgment on the deeper issues. Max Muller in his book *India— What Can it Teach Us ?* — a book which, according to his Life, seems to have influenced Mr. Gandhi in his early days — wrote :

> It is at all events a problem worth considering whether . . . there are not two hemispheres . . . in human nature, both worth developing — the active, combative, and political on one side ; the passive, meditative, and philosophical on the other ; and for the solution of that problem no literature provides such ample materials as the Vedas, beginning with the Hymns and ending with the Upanishads.

In every nation, and almost in every individual, there must be some mixture of these two sides of human nature, and if, according to national character, the balance between the two is different in India and in England, then each country may well benefit by preserving its own characteristic balance, while maintaining sympathetic contact with the other.

A cause of friction more serious than the social matters just referred to lies in the treatment of Indians who seek to settle in the British Dominions or Colonies. This has been a familiar question in Indian politics since Mr. Gandhi in his early years lived in South Africa and took up the case of the Indians settled there. Something has been done since then in certain places to improve the position so far as discrimination against Indians is concerned ; but many causes of grievance still exist, while economic conditions have tended to increase the resistance to immigration in general. Here again, as in the case of the social grievances already mentioned, many of the results of which Indians complain are matters which most Englishmen deeply deplore ; yet here also even if one sympathises, as I do, with Indian feelings, one must plead for the need to look below the surface grievances into the fundamentals of the problem so that it may be judged on its merits and not merely used as a handle for political grievances. I believe that in most

places the essential reason for the treatment of Indians as unwelcome immigrants is to be found not so much in racial or colour prejudice as in the fear of a possible threat to economic standards laboriously built up — the fear of competition in trade or wage-earning employment from people who are satisfied with much lower standards of living. To put this forward as an explanation is not necessarily to accept it as fully satisfactory — still less to defend all the results to which it has led ; but at least it is an explanation less wounding to Indian susceptibilities and one which deserves investigation. There are, moreover, two sides to the problems which arise when people of one country seek to make their homes in large numbers in another, and one is entitled to ask Indians on their side whether there has been sufficient care in the selection and supervision of Indian immigrants into foreign countries.[1] One may ask them to remember, too, that it is not only in the case of Indians that difficulties are made — indeed there have been at times serious objections from Canada and Australia about the quality of immigrants from the United Kingdom. Nor are the difficulties made only by white populations — indeed the most serious popular objections to Indian immigration recently have come from Burma and Ceylon. Yet when full weight is given to all counter-considerations and full acknowledgment made of the inherent difficulties of the situation (which incidentally is one which cannot be dealt with by the British Government alone), it remains necessary to urge that, wherever the blame may lie, things are happening which ought not to happen if Indians are to feel themselves equal citizens of the British Commonwealth. It may be that distinctions between races have to be recognised,

[1] If I had been dealing with the subject fully I should have referred to the admirable work that has been done in recent years by certain Indian leaders such as Mr. Sastri to get a better understanding of the Indians' position abroad. I might have referred, too, to the fact that even if Indian settlers have to complain of misunderstanding and unfriendly treatment in British countries they are still less favourably regarded in the U.S.A. — a point clearly brought out in a recent report by the Secretary of the Servants of India Society.

but, if so, the position must be frankly faced, there must be complete reciprocity, and the distinctions must be distinctions between equals, not between superior and inferior. The Indian case has long been urged but nothing substantial has been done to meet it. An impartial statement of the facts, covering the United Kingdom, the dominions, and the colonies, an intensive campaign for public education, the widest possible discussion, are all much overdue.

To remove causes of friction is important, but this alone will not suffice. It is necessary also to consider what can be done to promote constructive measures which will, both in fact and in the public apprehension, give to India the position of an honoured and equal member in the Commonwealth. To this end it is of the first importance that some system should be devised in which Indians and dominion statesmen can join together in the councils of the Commonwealth. I write as one who believes that Indian statesmen will be able to play a great part in these councils, that they will bring an element of real value, partly for its wisdom and difference of outlook, and partly as a first practical step towards a wider unity, throughout the world, among diverse nations. Although there has been hitherto no opportunity for full co-operation of this kind, there have already been contacts which give a vision of what might come. I retain a vivid memory, for example, of the Indian delegation at the Ottawa Conference, of the honourable part which they played, and of the warm welcome which they got. I feel sure that the experience of the arrival after the Atlantic crossing at Quebec, the coming together of all the Empire representatives, the frank discussions which ensued, must have made a strong impression on the minds of the Indians who came as delegates. Once India is sure of her own position as a fully equal member of the Commonwealth, the antagonism which has hitherto prevailed may pass away and a wide vista of hopeful possibilities would be opened.

For the full realisation of such a prospect, developments

in the machinery for inter-dominion consultation and for shaping a harmonious policy for the whole Commonwealth may be required. Probably, as already hinted, the world situation will be such that this will in any case be necessary for the sake merely of efficient plans for self-preservation. In the economic field, too, past experience has already demonstrated how essential it will be to have close co-operation. To frame this machinery in such a way that it may be powerful enough to achieve its object, and yet avoid creating a fear on the dominions' side that they may come too much under the influence of a dominating partner, will be a difficult task. This is not the place to propose detailed and specific plans. It is sufficient to emphasise the significance and importance of the general idea of bringing Indian statesmen effectively into the councils of the Empire.

Other measures of less importance, but which might yet have considerable significance, may be mentioned. Contact between the parliaments of the Commonwealth countries will be of value, and it may be possible to develop this further along the lines which have been started so successfully by the Empire Parliamentary Association.

Then, too, academic contacts should be made closer, and there will be special significance in close contact in the field where academic study and the handling of practical affairs can meet. In an earlier chapter reference has been made to the value of the idea underlying the Nuffield College foundation, with its purpose of providing a meeting-ground between academic thinkers and men engaged in practical affairs. It was there suggested that a parallel foundation, possibly associated with Delhi University, might mean much to India. A close link between organisations of this kind throughout the Commonwealth could become a factor of no inconsiderable importance. It will be good for all if economists and business men from India, the United Kingdom, and the other dominions, can sharpen their brains and widen their outlook by contact with each other.

Many other measures of this kind could be suggested, and it is in connection with such measures that modern developments in transport and communications can be turned to the advantage of humanity. Though each measure in itself may seem inadequate, the combined effect of all might help to transform the situation.

Where does all this leave us? Will a combination of measures on these lines be enough? I can imagine many Indians, having read up to this point, shaking their heads and saying that the case is not convincing. They will say, "A *patria morum*, as your quotation from G. M. Young has defined it, is not enough. The ryot or the mill hand will not be inspired by your doctrinaire liberalism. The rising generation of educated Indians who will sway political thought will find no sufficient attraction in the picture of 'the simple things that ordinary people need: a safe existence, the chance of making money and keeping it; giving their family a good start in the world; not being bothered; an occasional treat'. And anyhow they haven't had these things under your régime. In fact, if you seek to dig down into the roots of things, the tragedy of educated unemployment is one of the chief causes of our present discontents, and has thus been one of the chief factors in political feeling turning sour against you. Your way of life does not really appeal to us, and as far as we can see you haven't been able to produce anything very good or satisfying even in your own country. In fact you and the leaders in other Western democracies had got the world into a disillusioned mess, which was one of the conditions which made the present war possible. We would rather break away — risk breaking things up — creating chaos perhaps — and try our hands at something different in our own way."

That is a fair appreciation of thoughts which were, before the war, current in India, and which, even if they found their place in the realm of political agitation and visionary speculation rather than among the foundations for practical plans seriously conceived by experienced

men, might nevertheless have become so widespread as eventually to dominate Indian opinion and its political expression. But now the war has come, bringing a host of new and urgent issues and threatening so to alter the whole scene as to necessitate a fresh approach to every problem. Even if Indians have not yet appreciated the true significance of the new menace and of the forces which lie behind it, it is reasonable to believe that the time is not far off when they must do so, and that they will then visualise more clearly what is at stake and what the collapse of British influence in the world would mean to India. And, in this new atmosphere, light-hearted proposals for embarking on courses which are seen to involve the risk of precipitating internal chaos in India may be judged as unsuitable for the times — to be deferred even by those who are most attracted by them until there is a more sure prospect of surrounding stability. And, even if sentiment is not universally changed in this way, the urgent tasks which the war effort is forcing on India, with all the increased employment and even material prosperity which these may bring, may be expected so to preoccupy the masses of the people that they will be less stirred by visionary speculations.

But if the war may be expected to create a different atmosphere and the opportunity for a new approach, that can be no reason or justification for neglecting all those things which were influencing Indian opinion before it began. The issues which occupy men's minds may be changed, and may have become more urgent and more serious, but that only makes it all the more necessary on the British side to remember that Indian opinion has its own view on these issues and is essentially — and rightly — concerned with India's future. There is urgent need to convince India that British policy after the war will take account of the Indian point of view and will in its broad lines be in harmony with it. Above all, too, it will be necessary to concert a policy of international economic collaboration which will give India a setting

helpful to the development of her own economy, and to solving such problems as her own educated unemployment. A clear statement of British ideas on these matters, especially in so far as they will affect India, framed on broad lines, perhaps, but sincere and convincing, might, at the right moment, do much to help. But beyond this, all that has been already said in this chapter remains relevant. The matters which have been the cause of friction in the past, even if some of them appear trivial beside all that is at stake in the war, have not lost their significance, since anything that can be done now to show a desire to respect Indian opinion will be regarded as evidence of a similar purpose on the more important issues which need to be handled both during and after the war.

All these things need attention as necessary conditions for harmonious co-operation in the future ; but in the end, if we face realities, it will be wise to recognise that there are essential diversities between the Indian and British nations, and that it may be too much to hope that ties of sentiment or any status of common citizenship will *alone* be strong enough to provide the binding force which is required. These must be reinforced by a clear conviction on the Indian side that she will fare best in the British group and that it is in her true interest in the highest sense to remain in it — whether that group be standing alone or linked with a wider group of nations working together for man's freedom and peace. For the moment the chief necessity is that India should appreciate that for her to fight in the British group, and for that group to prevail in the present war, not merely offers her the best chance of achieving freedom to fulfil her own destiny in security, but in fact represents her only chance of independent survival. For the future, when the war is over, it will be necessary to provide a convincing plan of co-operation in peace — a plan which the British will be strong and determined enough to fulfil. Let us create faith in our purpose to do this, and let us all realise that in the end it will be the

course of this war which will decide not merely the relations between our two countries, but the destinies of each.

And there at the moment the matter must be left.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EPILOGUE

As I look back over what I have written I am very conscious of its imperfections. It has been impossible to cover the whole subject or convey all that lies behind what has been said. Thinking particularly of Indian readers, I realise that some of the things which I have said may be misunderstood. I conclude, therefore, with an imaginary dialogue between an Indian reader and myself, written on the optimistic assumption that some Indian reader at least will have read the book to the end.

Indian Reader: Well, I've read your book and I don't see quite where it leads. You have produced no complete plan.

G. S.: True, but I didn't set out to produce a complete plan. So much depends on Indian reactions and Indian sentiment that an attempt to be very precise would have been folly. My intention was rather to analyse the problem and make people think. Also I wanted to make myself think, and I had no idea at the beginning of the final conclusion to which I should come. But if you read what I have written you can get a pretty good idea of the main shape and arrangement of the plan to which I have been led.

I. R.: What do you mean by that?

G. S.: Well, for one thing I have made it clear that I think that the whole planning of the constitution should be looked at from the point of view of the practical tasks of government; and that in considering those tasks the "welfare of the people" question should come first.

I. R.: Oh, that, yes. I want to come back to that again later, but there is another general point first. You

made a great point at the beginning about seeing current problems against a background of history, but in Wint's part the background of history is very lightly sketched and most of his discussion is about problems of the day ; and then in your part you say very little about historical background and much more about world conditions.

G. S. : Yes, that's true. As a matter of fact the book inevitably shaped itself as it was written. Wint got drawn more and more to analysis of the problems of the day, and, as I wrote, I got more and more to see these problems not against the background of history but rather against that of world conditions. You can't get away from the fact that over all these discussions about India there hangs the shadow of the immediate threat and peril. That means many things. It means that at the moment the mere struggle for survival must take priority over all other considerations. It means that steps which might be ventured in a peaceful world cannot be risked now amid all the threats and perils of war. It means——

I. R. : Oh, yes, I can see that you would make the most of that as an excuse for the British to hold on to their Imperial power in India.

G. S. : Please don't say that. That is not really the important point, though of course you must acknowledge that it must make a difference to the British attitude if their relinquishment of power was going to mean that some aggressive foreign power would step in. It would be perfectly honest and justifiable for the British Government to say : " We are ready to relinquish our control so that Indians can assume responsibility for governing their own country, but we can't afford to let the Japanese or the Germans come in to control India. That would be ruinous both to Indian interests and our own, and we say quite squarely that we are not going to let that happen." That is common sense — self-interest too if you like ; but it is also India's interest. Undoubtedly that is a real consideration just now ; but what I was going on to say when you interrupted me was that there are other things of a

deeper significance about the present threat of the Axis powers. That threat is both a challenge and an opportunity. That Hitler and his threats have come into the world may be a tragedy ; but it would be a far worse tragedy if the evil vision which he has put before the nations did not force them to combine to prevent the vision becoming an all-embracing reality. The point which I want to make to you, and which I have tried to make at several points in the book, is that the present threat must be seen not as a mere temporary phase but as the sign of a conflict which will continue. The conflict that Hitler has started is no more than an embodiment in an extreme form of one which has been going on throughout human history and which it would be folly to expect to be settled for ever as the result of the present war. It is an extreme form, because never before have the doctrines on the one side been translated with such ruthless logic into a practical policy, and also because modern scientific inventions have made it possible to back these doctrines with a mechanical force against which mere moral qualities alone may be powerless. As to the nature of the conflict, I am sure that many Indians fully appreciate that. It has been described so often that it is almost tedious to repeat it, but there must be no misunderstanding about it. It is a conflict between men who claim to be their own supreme authority, entitled to rule others according to their will, and those who believe that there are principles which must guide all men's conduct. It is a conflict between those who would use humanity as a means to ends of their own conception — the greatness of the State embodied in their own power — and those who accept the categorical imperative " regard humanity always as an end and never as a means only ". It is a conflict between those who claim the right of racial superiority and those who believe that every individual should be treated equally as a human being. It is a conflict between those who believe that ruthless efficiency in achieving their own narrowly conceived worldly purposes

is the only test of merit or justification for survival, who regard respect for truth, kindliness, moral scruples, or sympathy for the weak and oppressed as signs of contemptible decadence, and those who accept the entirely contrary doctrines of the religious faiths which are held in Britain and India.

One could go on indefinitely on these lines. There can surely be no doubt on which side in such a conflict India stands. And that indicates the real significance of the present peril, its importance as a uniting force which should make us forget all minor differences, and indeed which makes all these minor differences appear relatively insignificant.

I. R.: Yes, that's all very well and undoubtedly India would stand against Hitler in the antithesis which you have drawn. But the question in our minds, when you ask us to join with all our strength in the actual struggle and forget what you call minor differences, is whether we can really trust you to stand yourselves truly for the anti-Hitler doctrines and to carry them out when the war is over.

G. S.: There you have touched on a key point, and that is one of the things which I had in mind when I spoke of the present peril as a challenge. I quite agree with you that if we say to our own people or to you, "Let us all join together, staking our lives and property in this struggle for right against wrong", that puts upon us an obligation to work not only for the defeat of 'wrong' in the present war, but for the creation of 'right' when it is over. There can be no going back to half measures and compromise of principle. The call for co-operation against Hitler must put up our own standards of national and international conduct, and is a challenge to be ready with a constructive policy when the war is over. If Indian leaders were to make their main point now a demand for some sort of assurance on the general aims of British post-war policy as a condition of their co-operation in the war effort, that would be a demand which would, I believe, evoke a great volume of sympathy from the British public.

Certainly I myself would sympathise with it. Of course you couldn't expect an exactly precise answer from the British Government, because the whole future is so uncertain ; but there are many things which could be discussed now and which are indeed being considered in London, especially in the field of economic policy, in regard to which Indian leaders might well say that they want Indian representatives to be kept in touch and India's views taken into account. Why do not Indian leaders themselves specify the points on which they want assurances about British post-war policy ? Even if they can't get precise answers and guarantees now, straightforward proposals and discussions would help to clear the air. So far, all that has been put forward by Congress as to post-war policy has been vague and general.

I. R. : I doubt if that will lead to anything that will satisfy our politicians ; but before I follow that up I want to come back to your idea about the " welfare of the people " as representing one of the chief tasks of government. Your ideas about ' welfare ' are probably quite different from ours. You seem to be thinking in terms entirely of increased production, and probably, at the back of your mind, you have got the usual British idea that, by increasing the purchasing power of the people of India, you could increase the market for British manufactures.

G. S. : No, that's not fair. Of course I believe incidentally that, broadly speaking, if India is happy and prosperous that will be good for the world and, therefore, too, for the British ; but in all that I have written I have tried to look at the matter from the Indian point of view. When you ask me what I mean by ' welfare ' you are really asking me to expound my ideas on moral philosophy and the scale of values according to which I would arrange the objectives of human conduct. I have been very conscious as I was writing that I ought perhaps to have added something about that as part of the background, but to have painted that in fully would have made the book too long. But I will try to put my views very briefly, dealing

only with what I would call worldly welfare, the sort of things with which Government action is concerned. That means leaving out of account many things that matter much more. I certainly don't regard the increase of material wealth as the main objective of human conduct — or even as the main objective for Government policy. But I believe that a certain minimum material standard of living is necessary to true welfare — a certain standard of what Aristotle called the ἐκτὸς χορηγία, the trappings of life — and that it is the duty of Government to devise policies which will give every citizen a chance of this. The standard need not necessarily be a very high one, but it must certainly be one very much higher than that now attained by the great mass of the Indian people. It becomes especially important to ensure an adequate standard when people are taken from their natural surroundings of rural life and transferred into the strange and demoralising conditions of large towns. Industrialisation in fact enormously increases the need for ensuring minimum material standards, and, as I have pointed out in Chapter Two, that need reacts back into the countryside, because unless rural standards are raised too there will be a constant flow of workers from the countryside coming in to depress the urban standards. But minimum material standards do not themselves create welfare or happiness, though their absence can destroy it. Worldly happiness must then be found for the great mass of people partly in doing their job of work well in a setting to which they 'belong' — which is natural to them — and partly in simple human relationships and playing their rôle in the life of their community. I believe that the 'setting' to which the vast majority of the Indian people still naturally 'belong' is the village setting, and therefore I think that everything possible should be done to maintain and improve that. And I believe that in the simple round of village life and administration, combined with an economic production (improved agriculture, mixed with 'ruralised' manufacture) raised above its present level, it

should be possible for Indians to attain as great a measure of happiness as is possible for most people in this world.

I. R. : I must interrupt here, because what we claim is that in the past adequate, if simple, standards did prevail throughout the Indian countryside, and that in those days the running of village communities gave an interest to village life, and that is just the state of affairs which you British have destroyed. That, by the way, is one of the charges against the British with which you have not dealt at all adequately in your Chapter Two.

G. S. : I think Wint's Chapter One and my Chapter Two cover the main points, but I agree that there is a lot more to be said. To deal with the subject in all its aspects would really require another book. The charge which you put now is one on which there is room for a great deal of argument, and, although I know you can quote English writers as well as others in support of your view about the condition of the countryside before the British came, and although it may be true of certain parts of India, I think if one investigates history correctly there is much more to be said on the other side. I am not, however, concerned with that now, because what we have got to deal with to-day are the conditions as they exist to-day, and as to those, whatever might have happened to India if the British had not come there, even if — as is most improbable — no other outside Power had intervened in the chaos which characterised the last days of the Moghul Empire, India would have felt the impact of Western civilisation and Western industrialisation. It is really mechanical advance and industrialisation that have changed the scene. Industrialisation in India had been advancing very fast in the present century — although the main Indian complaint is that it had not gone nearly fast enough — and now a new and urgent need for going faster has been forced on all countries by Hitler's policy — the need for industrialisation for equipping mechanised fighting forces in self-defence. China has gone through very much the same process — first industrialisation as a

normal development to increase wealth and keep pace with the Western world, followed now by intense pressure for industrialisation for the purposes of war. China, too, is seeing her ancient village life broken up. India could not in any case have escaped that fate. If industrialisation and the impact of Western ideas on the simple social structure of the East is an evil, then, somehow or other, that evil had to come, and I believe that if it had not been for the British intervention it would have come much more painfully to India than has actually been the case. Anyhow don't let's argue now about who has been responsible for what has happened. The real point is that India is now in actual fact well advanced in the stage of industrialisation and gripped in the need of going further, up to the point necessary for self-preservation and for obtaining *security* to develop her destiny according to her own character and ideals. The true objectives for her statesmen now must be to achieve this and yet at the same time to create conditions which will make possible for her people a form of welfare or happiness which is in harmony with their character and way of life. All this was in my mind in what I wrote in Chapter Two. As I see it, the main foundation for that happiness must be sought in the structure of rural life rather than in great urban concentrations which would tear the people from their natural setting in the countryside. Therefore not only should economic and social policy (especially education) be directed to this end, but the political structure also should be framed to help in the same direction. As much as possible of the task of government should be localised and made to rest back again on the village community.

I. R.: Isn't that all really out of date and a bit too simple? The fact is that educated people are ceasing to take any interest in village life.

G. S.: I don't think you're right, for if you take the great mass of India I do not believe that the whole structure of the countryside has altered very much. Also, if properly

handled, some of the inventions of modern science can be used to add greatly to the scope and interest of village life. But mainly I feel that, whatever may have happened, people can still find their pleasures in the simple things. Even in a sophisticated and over-industrialised country like England I believe that this is possible. Here, for example, is a picture from a modern and quite sophisticated English writer [1] which I came across the other day :

> Even nowadays such villages are to be found in the wilder parts of England, and as we enter them we can scarcely help feeling that here, in this cluster of cottages, cut off from rail or city, are all the elements of a perfect existence. Here is the Rectory ; here the Manor-house, the farm and the cottages ; the church for worship, the club for meeting, the cricket field for play. Here life is simply sorted out into its main elements. Each man and woman has his work ; each works for the health and happiness of others. And here, in this little community, characters become part of the common stock ; the eccentricities of the clergyman are known ; the great ladies' defects of temper ; the blacksmith's feud with the milkman, and the loves and matings of the boys and girls. Here life has cut the same grooves for centuries ; customs have arisen ; legends have attached themselves to hilltops and solitary trees, and the village has its history, its festivals, and its rivalries.

I think that conjures up a picture which shows the possibilities. Take China too and the picture drawn in one of the best popular books on China in recent years, *My Country and My People*, by Lin Yutang. There you will find just the picture which is in my mind of the mass of the people finding their real pleasure in simple relationships. I think I can claim, too, that Mr. Gandhi is on my side in this matter. I won't go over all the ground again. Do read my Chapter Two carefully. What I have just said may help to give you my background to that, and I hope you may feel that my ideas on welfare are not so different from your own.

[1] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*, p. 40.

I. R. : Perhaps not, but your proposed methods are not convincing. You rely on wide-spread rural education. But ' education ' hasn't helped us very much so far.

G. S. : I had in mind something very different from what India has had hitherto. If you want a practical illustration of what can be achieved by education of the right kind, study the story of the People's High Schools in Denmark. Read a little book, just published, called *The Future in Education*, by Sir Richard Livingstone. He describes how, during last century, Denmark, with no economic advantages, passed from depression to prosperity, and became a pioneer and model in agricultural methods — largely as a result of the High School movement. The spirit of that movement, too, links up with what I said about ' welfare ' in simple rural life. Christian Kold, the shoemaker's son who mainly created the movement, " taught the young people that one can be noble-minded, even though one milks the cows or clears away the dung . . . and scoffed at ' progress ' which revealed itself in extravagant clothes and superficial amusements ". I don't suggest that the Danish scheme is exactly applicable to India ; but it contains many ideas and lessons. Education needs to be interpreted with a new vision in India.

I. R. : Well that may be so, but I am afraid all these things are very far away from those that interest the principal political leaders and the main political feeling in India to-day. What they would say is, " All this talk about welfare has nothing to do with you. Your job is to transfer government into Indian hands and let Indians decide for themselves how they would seek the welfare of their country and its citizens."

G. S. : That may be true, but, after all, the next stages for India must be taken in agreement between our two countries, and the British public is going to be very interested in what is likely to happen to India before they agree to the final relinquishment of their own responsibility. Also, if you are right that these questions of the

welfare of the people are far removed from the ordinary issues of political controversy to-day, then I say that is a confession of great error. It is a tragedy that all this political manœuvring should be distracting attention from practical tasks of government which, as I have urged, essentially require Indian leadership. Anyhow, one of the objects for which I have been writing is to emphasise the essential connection between politics and the welfare of the people.

I. R.: And how does all this react on your views as to the next constitutional steps? You have not made that very clear.

G. S.: Well, as I told you, I did not want to be too precise, but for all practical purposes I think I can summarise my ideas fairly simply; and you must remember that I am looking at the whole matter in terms of the welfare of the people. My main conclusions are four. First, Parliamentary democracy of the Westminster pattern will not suit India and you will have to work out a system of your own. Secondly, there can be no true democracy of any form except on a foundation of better universal education than exists at present in India, nor, indeed, without this can there be any real social and material improvement. Thirdly, the communal question can only be settled in the course of working together on practical tasks. Therefore the essential thing is to find a basis on which Indians can, with adequate freedom and responsibility, get started to work on the practical tasks of administration and government. In order to get such a start in conditions which all sides will accept, I believe that the presence of some impartial arbitral authority may provide the key to the whole problem. I believe that in the long run this can be best secured by developing the function of the British Crown. Fourthly, India will not be able for some time to stand alone in the world. She will not have the necessary political strength and unity, nor, which is of much more practical importance, will she have the necessary strength to defend herself — fighting forces

adequately trained and commanded, as well as manufacturing capacity capable of equipping those forces. Her best chance of obtaining freedom and security to develop her own destiny on her own lines lies in remaining a member of the British group. These are the main conclusions supported by my arguments in the book, and they all point to the necessity for a gradual process developing step by step ; not being in too much of a hurry to get everything all at once ; starting with the practical tasks which I have described in my Chapter Two. In fact I see the need for a transitional stage during which you will need a helping hand, not because you cannot produce sufficiently able ministers and administrators, but because it will take some time before you can achieve unity, and before you can build up the human foundations for true democracy, as well as the economic foundations for a sufficiency of both " guns and butter ". With a helping hand from us, you can achieve all that peacefully if you will work with us. Without that, you may easily slip back into chaos.

I. R. : Oh, but all that is much too slow. We want to get on with the job now. All this talk of gradual stages of development exasperates us.

G. S. : Isn't this a case of " more haste less speed " ? Many of us think that if you had co-operated in these last few years you would be far, far more advanced on the road of constitutional progress by now. And what I suggest doesn't mean waiting, or " not getting on with the job ". What you need to do is, first, to get a small group of first-class men working out the details of a new constitutional plan suited to your needs (as was done in the case of South Africa) ; secondly, to send your ministers back to office in all the provinces ; thirdly, to join in the conduct of the war as members of the Viceroy's Council or of a larger War Advisory Council. These are all great tasks ready at once to your hand. But that is taking me into the immediate controversy, and I didn't want to deal with that, but with the longer issues.

Perhaps the immediate controversy may be settled before this book appears.

I. R. : Well, anyhow, whether you are talking of the current controversy during the war or of the ultimate constitutional development, I think it's too late to talk as you do. We don't trust you any more. Your proposals involve asking us to be satisfied with something less than full self-government, and to trust the British to make a final surrender in the end.

G. S. : I am sure that is looking at the matter in the wrong way. As a matter of fact, if you had started working the 1935 Act the whole game was in your hands. If you had got going, working the powers that you had under the Act, the other steps would have followed inevitably. You Indians always remind me of the definition of the optimist and the pessimist. The optimist looks at his glass and congratulates himself that it is half full. The pessimist looks at the same glass and complains that it is half empty. As a matter of fact, your glass, after the 1935 Act, was nine-tenths full ; but you refused to take advantage of that and concentrated on complaining about the one-tenth that was missing. Anyhow, I have given you my ideas about the way in which I think the next steps could be worked out to the real benefit of the Indian people, and I want to emphasise that the rôle which I see for the British authority is not one of continuing to exercise control, but rather a twofold function : — first, to be there as an impartial arbitral authority ; and secondly, to work with you in the building up of your defence forces so that you may be strong enough to stand alone.

I. R. : Yes, there is something in that, but it still involves co-operation and it's too late for that. We don't trust you any more.

G. S. : Yes, I know that's what you are always saying. I remember being told by so many Indians that the words 'too late' ought to be written over the door of every Government of India office. Of course we have made many mistakes, and missed many opportunities. But the

fault isn't all on our side. And it has often seemed to me that that 'too late' formula was an easy excuse for never being ready to take the responsibility for agreeing to anything which did not concede 150 per cent of the most extreme demand. In any case I refuse to believe that it is too late. I remember so well in my own first Budget speech, in 1929, making a great appeal for co-operation and being told in the subsequent debate and in private conversation that it was too late for that; that the days of co-operation were over. None the less, in my five and a half years' work in India I found it possible to get an immense amount of co-operation from Indians. We had co-operation over seven budgets, co-operation in our Banking Enquiry, co-operation in an economy campaign which, incidentally, produced greater results than any outside 'Axing Committee' had ever done, co-operation in setting up the Reserve Bank, and, above all, co-operation in the working of the Finance Department, about which I can never think without emotion when I remember the devoted service that I got from the Indian staff. I am convinced there are great opportunities still for working together, and that this war gives us a chance of making a fresh start.

I. R.: Well, I think you are rather too simple-minded when you talk like that. After all, everything we have got so far we have got by conflict, and all advance in human affairs comes by conflict between extremists. The reasonable and co-operating people never really count. The extremists fight together, and out of the rough-and-tumble of their fighting slow progress gradually comes.

G. S.: Ought not civilised human beings to be able to devise a process involving less waste of effort and less misery? But I know what you mean. Something like those lines of George Meredith's:

> In tragic hints here see what evermore
> Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force
> Thundering like rampant hosts of warrior horse
> To cast that faint thin line upon the shore.

Perhaps one can be satisfied with accepting that, if one can believe that the " faint thin line " is really an advancing tide of progress. But I want to make two points about that. First of all, the real conflict now is between Hitlerism and anti-Hitlerism, a conflict which I believe will go on after this war. There can be no doubt that you are on the same side with us in that conflict, and the point is that neither you nor we can afford to have two conflicts going on together. The mere fact that we are fighting on the same side against Hitlerism ought to give us a new opportunity and the chance of making a fresh start. My other point is a narrower and more practical one. As a matter of fact, if I am to be perfectly frank, I must confess that I do not wholly disagree with your point of view, so far as it applies to the past. It probably *was* necessary for you to fight the British Government in order to get a move on about constitutional advance, and I think you achieved something by doing so ; but the point is that you really won your victory in the 1935 Act, and you ought to have changed your tactics then. The British public and Parliament meant to meet all your demands in substance then, and only wanted to have limiting provisions so far as necessary to ensure that the transition should work smoothly and that a form of government should be set up in India which would be fair to all parties. The British public has felt deeply that those proposals were not taken up in the spirit in which they were offered, and you have got to a point now where the more you fight the British public the less willing will they be to make further concessions. They have got down to bedrock principles now, and what they need to be convinced of is that there will be reasonable co-operation on the Indian side, and that those into whose hands the power of government is to be given will use that power fairly and for the welfare of the Indian people. Anyhow, you cannot get away from the fact that the next steps must be taken in co-operation between the two sides and that a peaceful solution must be far better than a fight. I was

glad, for example, to see that Jawaharlal Nehru in his last book recognised that — I mean that he recognised that it would be worth a great deal to India to get her freedom peacefully and in a process of agreement and co-operation with us.

I. R.: Well, it all comes back to the point that if you want that process of peaceful co-operation, somehow or other you have got to convince us that you are honest in your ultimate purpose.

G. S.: Yes, that is the real point. And if all your leaders would address themselves to that point and ask themselves, "What can we reasonably demand as an assurance that the British Government is honest in its intention?" then I think you would get a great deal of sympathy and support in this country. In fact the problem of India is so difficult that it can only be properly solved if the best intelligences in both countries work together. I come back to my quotation from Milton in the Introduction: "A little generous prudence, a little forbearance for one another . . . might win all these diligences to join and unite into one general and brotherly search for truth". That is what we really need, "a little generous prudence and a little forbearance for one another", and I should like to appeal to Mr. Gandhi to make it the crowning act of his life, to be the peace-maker at this supreme crisis, and instead of fencing with the British Government or asking for the fulfilment of extreme conditions which in fact cannot be immediately fulfilled, to use his great influence to make his followers realise two things: first, that this is a war for right against wrong and *your* war just as much as ours; and secondly, that here in this war emergency is the challenge and opportunity to make a fresh start in the approach to all our joint problems.

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*